THE CONFEDERATES.



THE

CONFEDERATES.



A STORY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF FORMAN, &c.

Oh, they are thoughts that have transfix'd my heart,
And often (in the strength of apprehension)
Made my cold passion stand upon my face,
Like drops of dew on a stiff cake of ice.—B. JONSON.

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CHAPTER I.

Mr. Cothelston came into the drawing-room, that afternoon, just before the dinner-bell rang—Lady Annabella and Rupert just after; and dinner was announced, before either of the girls had appeared.

"I sha'n't wait for any one of them," said the Squire, "if their mother can be punctual, whose habits, I am sure, are none of the most——"

"Now, that is a little unfair, Mr. Cothelston," cried Lady Annabella. "That is a little hard, really—when, in compliance with your whims, I am the most regular person in the house. By far the most:

though I own, I think, all those punctilious attentions to forms, and hours, and minutes, no mark of a superior mind."

"Don't you see, my dear, that Mr. Ullesbey is offering you his arm?" said her husband.

"Ah! just in time—good girl! always contriving to keep out of a scrape. You shall have mine then. Well—Miss Mary, well?—Among people who understand each other, every thing can be always communicated in three words," added he, in a whisper, as he walked down stairs with Miss Mac-Eure; "and we have not met, you know, since—since—— Who were the two, my love, that remained together last in the saloon?"

"Not Mr. Carruthers and myself, if that is what you mean, Sir; nor have I any thing to tell, I give you my word."

He was prevented from enlarging upon this topic, by their arrival in the parlour, which necessarily separated the ladies and gentlemen: and before, but not long before,

they had half dined, down came Clara and Jaqueline, one after another.

Useless, as the Squire had long experienced such a measure to be, he nevertheless fired off some cutting reproofs and sarcasms, in this instance; dividing them, pretty impartially, between each of his daughters. These were replied to by the eldest, who stood on the defensive, in the customary fashion of that family; and not without spirit, she endeavoured to argue, that the being late for dinner was, in itself, so unpleasant and inconvenient, as to be punishment enough, without a scolding in addition—although she was in the practice of voluntarily incurring that inconvenience, at the rate of three days out of seven, all throughout the year. As to Jaqueline, of whose retorts her father stood most in dread, she behaved remarkably well, on this occasion; having her mind so much pre-occupied by other matters, that, properly speaking, she could not be said to have heard one sentence of his reproof.

When the wine and dessert were set out, the Squire filled a glass, and proposed as a toast, "Confusion to——" an eminent individual in France: a sentiment, which, though not in the general habit of giving toasts, he had regularly announced at this hour, ever since the renewal of the war.

"Little does he think," said Rupert, "who has been added to his active enemies, since the signature of the definitive treaty, last year: little thinks he, that Sir Poole Preston is in arms against him. Pray, Miss Cothelston, when does that renowned officer come back to Molesden?"

"How should I know?" returned Clara. "You surely do not suppose there is any thing in all that nonsense?"

"In all what nonsense?" said Ullesbey.

"Nay, if you have heard nothing about it," she replied, somewhat out of sorts, "you are not likely to find me repeating the ridiculous country-town talk, so much encouraged by the Ludwells, and those sort of people. Perhaps there may have been some idle reports, I believe there were,

but nothing in them on the face of the earth. He always makes himself particular, with some young woman out of a family; and, as a kind of joke, one gives in to it—knowing his ways. Sir Poole, and I, are on friendly terms—near neighbours should be so;—just, you see, upon a fair and friendly——"

"Ay, of course, of course," cried Ullesbey. "Here's the Baronet's good health."

"Do you consider him as a man of talent?" observed Lady Annabella.

"Ma'am, I have not precisely discovered where his genius lies: for the profession, I hope it will appear, which he has lately taken up."

"I hope so too," said Mr. Cothelston; "for the day must come, and soon come, when we shall either lose much of our preponderance in Europe—or, be more indebted to military talent—than this country has been for these hundred years. That's all I say; and do you mark my words, Ullesbey."

"Yes, Sir," said Rupert.

"The political horizon," continued the Squire, "although—— What are you looking for?"

"Only my box, Sir: I have dropped my snuff-box. Don't let me interrupt you, Sir. Not that I take a dozen pinches in a dozen hours, may be; but it's one of those ingenious foreign boxes, which, I do think, are the very happiest and best-conceived playthings—they must be carefully kept in order, no doubt——I beg your pardon, though—— "

"The political horizon," said the Squire, "although at the present moment overcast—— Miss Cothelston, we are waiting, and quite ready to wait on, till you shall be pleased to finish what you are saying to your cousin across the table, in a tone of voice utterly incompatible with the conversation of any body else."

"Not at all, papa; never mind me," cried Clara, full of her own observations, with which she proceeded as loudly as before—"And what I might not choose,"

said she, " to dwell upon, in my own case, I shall mention without scruple, when any of the rest are ill used; and I must insist that I know of no impertinence equal to a man's going through a family, paying attention—first to one, with a flippant conceit and confidence,—then to another, all in the dismals and sentimentals; when nothing is intended, beyond whim, caprice, and the means of occupying his thoughts for the time. And I do declare most solemnly, that if he leaves England without calling at Peterstow again——yes—and without calling to some purpose—— "

" Hold your tongue, do, Clara," cried her father, pretty roughly. She raised her head, probably with intention to dispute the point; but on observing a feeling of displeasure and annoyance strongly expressed in Rupert's countenance (for, to the sensations of her cousin, or sister, it made no part of her plan to advert), she paused; and finally suppressed what she was about to add.

"Mr. Ullesbey," said Mary, who, though she could not help visibly manifesting some distress, exerted herself to appear regardless of such ill-nature; "do you remember the morning when you were so kind as to escort me to Westerwolde?"

"Most distinctly, Miss Mac-Eure."

"Perhaps, now we are better acquainted, I may wave all ceremony, some of these days, and request you to do me the same favour once more."

"Not merely once, I hope," replied Rupert; "for I never recollect to have passed a more agreeable morning, since I first came into this country."

"Sufficiently forward, I think!" observed Clara, in a low voice, to her sister. "How amazingly popular, gracious, and condescending, some people are become, now they have met with a little admiration!"

Jaqueline frowned, and had drawn up with intention to give her one of her severest answers—when she suddenly changed her manner. "Very true, Clara," she replied; "and the worst of the business is, that Mary carries all before her. You may

depend upon it, she will now turn the head of that other young man."

"Oh!—I dare say. Ha—ha—ha—oh! I will answer for her: for her intentions at least; but we sometimes intend what we cannot exactly——" Here Miss Clara was called off, by being desired to cut a melon for her father, which when she had achieved,

"The truth is, however," said she, resuming her whisper; "the truth is—— Pooh! you are not in earnest? Besides, you are too severe upon her; for Mary is not by nature a coquette. And if she were ever so great a one, he, I am positive——"

"Nay," said Jaqueline, interrupting; "I rather judge by his way of conversing, than by their actual compliments, on either side. Can one mistake the alteration in his voice? Observe too the different expression of his eyes, when he talks to her, and when he talks to any other of us! But, no matter, my dear; my mother's leaving the room —see."

Her ladyship was so; and made her exit, closely followed by her eldest daughter; who had something to ruminate upon, now, which afforded her far less amusement, than jealousy and apprehension. Instead of going up stairs, Mary and Jaqueline took a turn in the shrubbery together: and after they had walked there for an hour nearly, always on the point of talking about matters most interesting to them both, but neither (from the peculiarity of their respective situations) choosing to lead to them at once—they seemed to have given up the design; and were returning home, when —with some effort—"If we are to be friends at all," said Jaqueline, "we must be friends throughout. You managed with your usual discretion, just now; but I saw you were hurt at Clara's spite and mischief. There was no reason for it, however—his whole heart is yours, Mary; so do not you be uneasy. He may not declare himself, at present; and he may also have such grounds for his conduct, as would satisfy

you in every respect. Believe me—he loves you dearly."

Miss Mac-Eure, with emotions of gratitude that affected and overcame her, caught her cousin's hand—"I have discovered the nobleness of your mind, dearest Jaqueline; and have gained your friendship," she replied; "which must always be a blessing to me, were I never to see Mr. Carruthers again."

That gentleman was now on the eve of his departure; and sorely was he beset between duty, firmness, and violent passion. The distress of his heart could not be concealed from his parents; and, being an only son, of whom they were mutually proud, and whose inclinations had hitherto been studied by each of them, with unlimited indulgence; his mother threw out a hint, that, if he would give up a profession, to which both her husband and herself had ever been averse, and settle quietly in the country, their objections to any ulterior step that he might have in view, would be very likely to give way; particularly, as so

much could be said in favour of the young person on whom his heart was fixed. But the idea of quitting the army, at the present juncture (indeed he had but just entered it), could not be entertained by Bentley for a moment.

Each of his parents, therefore, separately advised, and besought him, to go no more to Peterstow; which could only be attended (they urged) with discomfort to himself, and, of course (they naturally thought), with equal or heavier anguish to the object of his affections. Bentley saw the sense and justice of these representations; and when he called for his horse, to make a few parting visits, he came to the following compromise with Mrs. Carruthers. Although it would be unthankful, and even brutal, to avoid all notice of the Cothelston family; yet, he assured her, his intention was, to ask only for Mr. Cothelston, or Ullesbey; and to charge them with his last adieu to the females of a house where he had ever been received with the most friendly hospitality.

The Squire he did not find within: but Rupert was at home; and there is some reason to conjecture that he expected the visit.

They had a great deal to say on various topics: how far Carruthers thought proper to let the other into his confidence, does not appear; though it is difficult to suppose that he could have talked so long, or so warmly, upon any subject but one. On receiving his message to the ladies, Rupert felt vexed and dissatisfied; and did not disguise his opinion, that, whether any thing decisive should be said by Carruthers, or not, one final interview, for the purpose of an affectionate farewell, would be consolatory to all parties.

From that measure, however, Bentley was precluded by his promise; and so strictly did he adhere to the spirit of what had passed between him and his mother, that he declined even to walk in the garden with Ullesbey; being convinced, that, by so doing, he should almost as inevitably ensure a meeting with Miss Mac-Eure, as

if he had in direct terms demanded to see her. Rupert grew more and more discomposed: he now left Carruthers by himself for a while, after stipulating that he should not depart, unless his own return was delayed beyond five minutes. He saved his time, however, and offered to ride with him part of the way back to Haddesley.

In the course of their ride Ullesbey persuaded his friend to make a deviation from the regular road, in consequence of a sudden recollection that had occurred to him, and a desire to see something which (he said) that recollection had particularly excited. The other made no objection. They turned therefore to their left, and ascended a hill, passing in their way through a copse which, by the by, furnished an excellent object for several of the eastern windows of Peterstow house, and from thence they crossed into fields situated on a respectable elevation. Rupert now seemed to be more busily employed in looking out sharply and eagerly for some purpose of his own, than in that attentive listening, and precise re-

plying to the remarks of his companion, which, according to Lord Chesterfield, constitutes the perfection of discourse. They then skirted a small village, forded a stream which at that time ran very rapidly, and would in winter have been sufficiently perilous, and arrived at the spot which Rupert had induced the other to make all this deviation in order to see. Here stood a new farm-house that Mr. Cothelston was building; in the progress of which, Carruthers had not the remotest shadow of interest, and Ullesbey, in reality, as little: indeed, when he came in front of it, the latter manifested something like disgust and disappointment, and one would have thought he had been baulked in some very confident expectation. A few words were said about the aspect and size of the rooms, and doubts expressed whether the adjacent buildings might not be beyond proportion to the main house; while neither cared a button whether they were so or not.

After loitering for a minute or two in this situation, they returned at a leisurely

pace, not across the fields as before, but through the village; and had nearly reached the high road again, when Rupert caught a glimpse of a female on horseback at a considerable distance from them, moving out of the lane and followed by a servant. This apparition was nothing more than he had been calculating upon for some time; but he expected to have seen two females in company. However, there could be no mistaking the livery of the servant;—and now anticipating the complete succcss of his plan, Rupert lost not an instant in calling out to his friend (but without saying a syllable about his discovery); and remonstrating on the tiresome dawdling way in which they had been creeping, he spurred his horse to a gallop. The one Mr. Carruthers rode was exceedingly hot, and having his head given him just at this moment, they ran a positive race to the termination of the lane; each laughing and desiring the other to hold up, but neither complying. Nor did they stop there, but wheeled furiously into the turnpike road, and with

difficulty reined in their horses on perceiving Jaqueline Cothelston and Mary Mac-Eure only a few yards before them; for the latter party, hearing this tremendous clatter, had halted and drawn aside with intention of leaving the middle of the road open to their passage. It would be difficult to say whether Carruthers or Miss Mac-Eure were most embarrassed by this rencontre. He looked reproachfully at Ullesbey, and with a hurried manner addressed some unintelligible observation to Mary; then turning in his confusion and uneasiness even to Jaqueline for relief, she being the person with whom, at present, he was on the most thorough understanding; "This meeting," said he, "is the result of accident on my part entirely. Mr. Ullesbey, I presume, can explain it;—but, since we have met, I hope you will allow me to say—I am glad to have the opportunity of wishing you your health, and all possible happiness. I go early to-morrow morning."

"You may recollect, Sir," replied Jaqueline, somewhat haughtily, "that on a former

occasion, I told you it was my desire to part from you in friendship: notwithstanding which, it now appears that you had intended to shun our family, and leave this kingdom—for how long a time nobody can foresee,—as if you had no regard left for any of us."

"I meant for the best," said he in great and perceptible distress; "I meant honestly and uprightly; and if you knew," looking first to her, then to Mary, "if you could imagine how very miserable the holding to my resolution has made me——I cannot endure it! Now,—at this moment,—I am ready to explain every motive, wish, and feeling of my heart," still keeping his eyes fixed upon Mary, "would you but condescend in kindness and pity to listen to me. But do not, I beseech you, do not let me suffer in your estimation, because I have acted according to my best notions of duty. We may never meet again, Miss MacEure."

This scene was undoubtedly a trial to Jaqueline; her countenance bore strong

testimony to the passions of jealous scorn and anger which were now struggling for their former dominion over her: but strenuously repressing the temptation, and, as it were, swallowing her indignation, "Mr. Ullesbey," said she, "come forward with me, if you please; I have several questions to ask you."

They rode on accordingly, attended by the servant; while Mary, who during this interval had reflected upon what was to be done, approached Bentley Carruthers, and accosted him in a tone of decision admitting of no reply.

"With a view to spare you embarrassment, and prevent you from feeling unhappy, I shall not merely assume that I am aware of the subject on which you seem desirous to speak to me, but will even run the risk (an excessively unpleasant thing, as you must be conscious, for any woman to do) of supposing that you mean more than perhaps you have ever made up your mind to acknowledge. Thus much, at least, is clear; that, upon consideration,

you had resolved not to open your mind to me at this time; and nothing but our having met at present—a circumstance wholly accidental, as you yourself allow—could have induced you to alter that determination. I therefore beg leave to say, Mr. Carruthers, that I must decline listening to a word about particular affection (should you entertain any) for myself. You have a regard for me, it is plain; and I am pleased and happy, and, trust me, sincerely grateful to say so. You have shown your regard by the most delicate and judicious advice, and the most effective services. With my whole heart I return your good will: I have long derived much satisfaction from your society, been gratified by your friendship; and I thank heaven, as I would for a blessing on a brother of my own, that I can now fully esteem and honour you."

"It is enough! it is enough!" cried Bentley, in transport, "my sweetest beloved Mary——"

"Stop, Sir," said she; "I must repeat that I can listen to nothing of this sort.

My decision is made up, I protest to you most seriously; and unless you intend to give me uneasiness, you will content yourself with taking leave of me, as you would part from any other friend: from a valued friend, I hope I may add;—from a sister, if you like it better."

"But I am not clear that I do," replied Carruthers. "You see, Miss Mac-Eure—dearest Mary, you see how I am situated—my profession has paramount claims upon me."

"To be sure, it has," said she.

"But should I return to England with an unblemished name and principles (and otherwise I devoutly hope I never may return at all), your charming, frank, and candid nature will surely permit me to look forward——"

"For your sake, and my own likewise, Mr. Carruthers, I had rather this subject were not persevered in,—I had indeed. We have just embarked in a new war, recollect; and, how long you may be detained in the East, it is impossible for mor-

tal to pronounce. Many women will fall in your way there: many estimable women, no doubt: and, to fetter yourself for your future life, with vows or engagements dictated by present passion, would be as senseless as it might become irksome to your natural wish for freedom, and perhaps utterly vain in the result."

Some ideas, acutely painful, occurred to her at these words; and in an almost inarticulate voice, she added,—"Let us overtake the others; you will choose to bid them good-bye also."

Jaqueline and Ullesbey were not far from them. The former assured Bentley of her good wishes (though still with some reserve of deportment), and held forth her hand very much as Catherine of all the Russias might have done. On Mary, when he took hers, he did not trust himself to look; and not a single observation accompanied their farewell. Rupert remained behind them for an instant. "You forgive me, Carruthers, my playing this trick upon you?"

"No question of that," said the other, rather endeavouring to smile, than actually smiling; "for I am guiltless of having in the least suspected your design; and this interview has been——has been——far from unsatisfactory. God bless you! Remember our correspondence."

CHAPTER II.

YOUNG Carruthers travelled in comfort; for, after all, while he continued a single man, no subaltern officer in the King's service, probably, had more command of money. His debts, thanks to the Doctor's indulgence, had been paid within these two years, for about the third time since he was nineteen; and he had, in truth, now grown contented, prudent, and regular; of which habits (though, so far was he from relaxing in liberality by becoming considerate, that he gave away a great deal more than he had ever done in his life before), he felt the full convenience and advantage. Being straitened in time, as he had hovered about Peterstow till the very last minute which his leave of absence prrmitted, he took four horses for the first eighty miles, then passed

two nights running in mail-coaches, and finally concluded his journey at a sea-port in the West, where his regiment had already arrived, preparatory to their immediate embarkation.

Many of our contemporaries, and yet more of our predecessors in this sort of biography, have favoured the world with a series of lively and entertaining adventures in stage-coaches; into which conveyances they no sooner introduce their hero, or even upon occasion their heroine, than a clever, humorous, and spirited dialogue ensues, between four (at least) of the most diverting characters that the world could have produced; who, fortunately for the reader, all happen to be travelling to the same point, in the same coach, on the same day.

Bentley Carruthers had no such luck. On his first evening, the remaining places in the mail were filled by a couple of Portuguese, who could not speak a word of any language but their own; and a young woman, in much affliction, seemingly, as she never took her handkerchief from her

eyes for a minute together during the whole night. Something worth relating might possibly have been extracted from this last traveller, had the poor girl met with a companion of more forwardness; but as it was —she showing a decided disinclination to talk—Bentley had not the ill-breeding and barbarity to torment her with questions. Neither can we say any thing more for his amusement on the second night. There was only one person for the greater part of the time in the coach besides himself; and Carruthers could with much pleasure have dispensed with him: a self-sufficient proser, who harangued upon his own exclusive concerns, without cessation, through the whole journey; not talking even with fluency, but still eternally talking, vain, coarse, and tenacious.

Bentley greeted his brother officers again with all the warmth that his sincerity allowed him to manifest. Some of them he really liked, and with all he laboured to keep on good terms; but he was as yet far from popular himself. The peculiarity,—

the strictness, as many called it, of his present manners,—the little delight that he took in stories which had nothing but indecency to recommend them,—and his avowed opinion, that neither profligacy of conduct, nor licentiousness of conversation, were of themselves sufficient to establish a man for a wit,—made him unacceptable, no doubt, to some of the officers, to those in particular, who from their age ought still to have been at school. Then, that (besides other treatises of a religious tendency) he had downright sermons among his books, was a well-known fact: and they more than suspected, that he was in the habit of reading them, as well as the Bible, not only on Sundays, but on week-days. The result of all these offences against the common practice of the regiment, may easily be guessed, —Bentley was called a Methodist; and some of the leading wags invented ludicrous stories about him, suggesting circumstances which placed him in ridiculous situations; and many good things were said of his godliness, and his turning up the whites of his

eyes. But in all this there was no such intolerable evil; and, to assert of the British army, or the British navy, now-a-days, that an apparently devout member of either (provided he be not a goose, or a hypocrite) must of necessity meet with systematic persecution, would, we are strongly disposed to believe, be a gross libel upon each profession. Certain trials and vexations, indisputably, will await any one who determines to live throughout as a Christian should, in any state of society; and the main trial to Carruthers, was pretended incredulity as to his reformation, and cruel sarcasms upon his present course of life, contrasted with the notorious irregularity of his former fashionable, free, and dissipated habits. On those topics, exceedingly disagreeable things were said to him; and such expressions frequently used, as the silliest, wrongest-headed, and most blustering fellows of the mess,—those, by the way, who probably would have been least forward to show spirit in a proper cause,—observed upon, and declared, that he ought to have taken

up. But Carruthers took up (as they called it) nothing whatever: he only insisted upon his sincerity of intention, when they twitted him with hypocrisy; and bore all their wretched efforts to annoy him, with such sense, patience, and firmness, that he soon became agreeable to, and even gained the friendship of those of his brother officers, who had seen most service; while, by degrees, his example operated to the advantage of the whole body.

Our business, just now, however, is with his adventures at the place from whence his regiment sailed for the East: one of which, though Bentley could not by possibility avoid it, a good deal resembled some of the frays and squabbles, which in former days had been of no rare occurrence to him.

The town, at this juncture, was full of the military. At all times, of course, it abounded in sailors: and owing to the misconduct of certain individuals belonging to a newly raised regiment, such ill blood had been lately excited between the two

branches of the service, that many very formidable encounters were daily, or rather nightly, taking place. Severe wounds had been given and received—murders were talked of (though none had hitherto happened), and sound drubbing considered as a mere flea-bite.

On the morning after Carruthers came into the town, he walked down to the quay to observe the progress of their own people in the embarkation, and superintend the duty appointed to him in particular. This accomplished, he lounged on, in the same quarter, looking at the men of another regiment, who were employed in getting horses on board a transport; and no very pleasant operation it was to witness. He soon had enough of the terror and misery of the poor animals: their sprawling, plunges, and furious resistance, till fairly off the ground; and their neighings, or what may be styled screams of agony, when craned up, and swinging in the air, preparatory to being lowered over the deck and deposited in the hold. Bentley stayed, however, as long as

Captain Cazzlehead, with whom he was walking, felt inclined; and when the Captain remarked, that seeing one horse lifted in, was very much like seeing another, our friend concurred, and willingly adjourned to the Rodney; where they entered the coffee-room of the inn, then crowded with company. "Most obedient, Mr. Carruthers," said a vulgar-looking man, seated in a box on the right hand of the door. Bentley stopped, and contemplating him with more surprise than delight—"Your servant, Mr. Holtofte," said he, and walked away to another part of the room. The two officers then called for some refreshment, when the Captain asked Bentley who his friend in the red waistcoat might be? Carruthers gave him a short but true description of Holtofte's situation in the. world; but upon his character, not being able to urge any thing advantageous, he refrained from saying a word. "As much the cut of a blackguard, as any body I have had the pleasure of seeing, since I

came into the West," observed Captain Cazzlehead.

Mr. Holtofte now made a movement from his own seat, and by oblique approaches seemed advancing towards them. "He is not coming here, surely," thought Carruthers: "he must have been drinking, or he would not think fit to claim a familiarity with me, who never gave him the slightest encouragement—— "

But his surmise was accurate: Holtofte had been drinking—had made himself half drunk moreover: and emboldened by that effect, when he got within three or four yards of these officers, he pushed forward, without any remaining symptoms of shyness, and would have seated himself; but both the young men edged down to the extremity of the bench, on either side, with the express view of preventing him. He stood therefore, facing Bentley, and leaning over the end of the table. "So, Sir! you have mounted the red coat, I see. Many things are strange to me in England; that, among the rest: for, though the army, Mr.

Bentley, is a line that we always said would suit you very well—one would have thought you'd have gone into the guards or dragoons. You! with your tip-top notions! Your title, I reckon, must be Captain Carruthers, now?"

"No, Sir," said the other gravely.

"No! then it will be before the year's out, I'll hold you seven to five. I don't know who has great acquaintance and interest, if you have not; and I don't know who has 'the coriander seeds,' if the Doctor has not; so the job must be done, betwixt you. Well, but, Captain, or whatever your rank is—where d'ye think I am come from? America, that's all: simple as I stand here:—landed the night before last."

Captain Cazzlehead here winked to Carruthers, intimating, that the fellow's impudence amused him: but Bentley would scarce have gone on talking to Holtofte, merely for his diversion, had not a train of ideas been now touched, which instantly carried him away to Peterstow, the Cothel-

ston connexions, future felicity, and Mary Mac-Eure.

"Sir, I now remember to have heard it mentioned," he replied, "that you had gone over to America; in quest, as I take it, of Mr. Mac-Eure."

"No matter what I went after, Captain Carruthers," returned Holtofte; "that's all between Squire Cothelston and myself. I minded my opportunities; I looked sharp to my own concerns; I have not come back a poorer man than I set out; and as for those rascals about Peterstow and Crowtonglass, whose principal business in life seems to be abusing me—I shall know how to stop their mouths for them."

"I have no disposition, Sir, to ask or hear about your concerns," observed Bentley, "further than I am entitled to make the inquiry: and you are conscious, that, on my father's account, I have an undoubted right to ask, when, where, and in what circumstances you found Mr. James Mac-Eure."

"Why d'ye keep worrying on about him?" replied the other, growing irritable and impatient.—"Undoubted right! If, by that, you mean that I shall feel myself bound to answer all your questions, perhaps we may differ there, Captain."

"I have already informed you that I am no Captain," said Carruthers. "Oh! you intend to provoke me, I perceive; but you will not succeed, Sir. 'Tis neither for my own sake, Mr. Holtofte, nor even for my father's, considerably injured as he was, by the transactions of that gentleman—or his ACCOMPLICES—that I persist in requiring some information."

"Don't tell me," cried Holtofte in anger; "don't talk to me about persisting and demanding! And above all, I would have you to know, Mr. Bentley Carruthers, that if you object to being called Captain, I object, much more, to the word 'Accomplices.' Who the devil do you glance at when you say 'Accomplices'?"

"Keep your temper," returned Carruthers, calmly. "I alluded to Mr. Alderstoke

and yourself; both of whom are by this time more generally suspected of being participators in a most extensive and scandalous fraud, than might have been the case, when Mr. Mac-Eure first absconded. You have been drinking, Sir; but, even under that influence, can hardly suppose you will browbeat or bully me. Do you choose to enter into those particulars which I require, concerning Mr. Mac-Eure's present residence and condition in America? Is he in any part of the United States, after all? Have you seen him, Sir?"

Holtofte felt dismally troubled and disconcerted, through the whole of these interrogations: he lowered his tone somewhat, but doggedly stuck to it, like Falstaff, that he would yield no reasons for any part of his conduct, upon compulsion.

"Should you object," said Carruthers to his companion, "to our leaving this place?" The other officer rose, as did Mr. Holtofte at the same moment, from the table on which he was reclining; and fixing his hands on his sides, dipping his head on

one shoulder, and eyeing Carruthers sternly and significantly, "I'm afraid I drive you away, Captain," said he.

"You do," replied Bentley; "for I am determined not to quarrel with you, and equally so, not to associate with you!"

He passed him with those words, and quitted the coffee-room; notwithstanding that Holtofte thought he had made up his own mind to proceed to the utmost rudeness, and even push the quarrel to the extremity of personal violence. But he was either awed by the other's gentlemanly deportment, or cowed by his firmness and composure, or, perhaps, disheartened by the subjects on which Carruthers had authoritatively reproached him: for, when things came to the point, and Bentley was up, and within arm's length of him, the resolution of Mr. Holtofte gave way; he looked after them to the door, and throwing himself all along upon the empty bench, reflected on what he should have done a minute before, and considered whether it might not be practicable to have his revenge, yet. Rich-

ard Holtofte was any thing but a coward; and though nobody could be better apprized of young Carruthers' reputation for personal strength and activity, he would readily have undertaken him at the only method of fighting, in which he (Holtofte) ever dreamt of engaging, and felt uneasy, and sincerely mortified, because he had missed an opportunity: consoling himself, however, with the reflection, that even if he had commenced hostilities in the public coffee-house, so many people would instantly have interposed, as to prevent any chance of the contest being decided. He only wished he could meet the youngster on the top of Halhead Down, by himself; and repeated that wish, in the last moments before he closed his eyes that night, and twice more (internally) while he was shaving next morning.

The regiment to which Mr. Carruthers belonged, was to have completed its embarkation, upon the day that we have now arrived at; but the wind being foul, several of the officers had leave to remain on shore,

with the strongest injunctions, however, not to absent themselves from the town for ten minutes together, and general orders to be on board during the night.

Towards evening, a party of them, Bentley being one, sauntered, as before, into the public room of the Rodney Hotel; where the latter gave the finishing stroke to the indignation with which he had already inspired Mr. Holtofte, by passing that worthy member of society without taking the least notice of him, either by word or gesture. The military gentlemen secured a box to themselves. Some called for mixtures of different sorts, for they reprobated the wine of the house universally; and Carruthers employed himself in writing a long letter, that kept him engaged till it had grown dark. He then left off for a while, and joined in conversing with the rest; which conversation Mr. Richard Holtofte honoured with his steady and undivided attention. "All in a body of course; and I wouldn't take an even bet that we sha'n't get licked as it is—" observed Ensign Twattiter. (We

must here remind the reader, that feuds ran high between the soldiers and sailors at this port.)

"Don't let us be late then," said a second officer.

"Give me fair play, and I'd fight any two of the Vengeur's men myself; but there's no fun in being overpowered by numbers, and getting one's bones broke very likely, just as one sets sail for a long voyage. Look sharp, Carruthers; we sha'n't be staying ashore for your love-letters."

"The Colonel told me," said Bentley, "that if I was on board before six to-morrow morning, he should be satisfied."

"Let him alone, let him alone," whispered Ensign Twattiter; "he'll catch a proper hiding; and 't will do him rather good than otherwise."

"Mind, we have given you warning," repeated the other; "if you desire to make one of a strong party, you may join us, and we shall be glad of your company—You don't imagine we are to remain here all night, for your accommodation?"

"I should think not," replied Carruthers coolly; "but, for my own part, I would risk a great deal, rather than send this letter unfinished: most certainly I would not do so, to avoid a black eye or a bloody nose."

"Well said, Mr. Carruthers," observed the Major, a good soldier, and a particularly sensible, unassuming, valuable man: "Moreover, in my opinion, you will run very little chance of either. These squabbles are always exaggerated, and we have heard of no mischief for the last two or three days. Do not distress yourself, therefore; I shall see the Colonel, and will tell him how I left you employed. Let the wind come round to whatever quarter it may, we shall assuredly not sail before eight or nine in the morning."

Bentley thanked him with more warmth than the occasion seemed to demand; but Major Badbury had been invariably civil and obliging, and the other felt secure of one friend at least in the regiment, as long as that officer remained attached to it;

whose society would be ever agreeable, and to whom he might repair with confidence, for sound, honest, and unprejudiced advice. All their party soon afterwards retired, with exception of Carruthers; he remained deeply intent upon his writing, and, quite unknown to himself, was most assiduously contemplated during that occupation, by Mr. Holtofte from another part of the room. The latter about this time demanded some brandy and a jug of hot water. Shortly he roared for brandy again, but no more water; indeed, it appeared to the waiter, that he had husbanded what was originally brought him in the jug wonderfully well.

Dick Holtofte now took to whistling, then to humming a tune aloud, and as he swaggered out of the coffee-house, he even favoured the company with some words from a song, the whole of which we sincerely wish we were enabled to record in this work; being clearly of opinion (with one of the greatest romance-writers in this or any former age), that nothing can mark the manners of mankind more, than the

fugitive ballads of any particular period. Unfortunately, however, only a couplet of Mr. Holtofte's song was audible enough to be preserved, which ran to this effect—

"What hinders our bliss? if my Sukey should ax,
What! but Boney, the War, and the Property Tax."

Mr. Carruthers was perhaps the only man present, who neither heard his singing, nor observed his departure; but steadily went on with his own business, which detained him till a very late hour. Then reading over the last of his letters once more, shaking his head at some passages, and nodding at others—as much as to say, that if they did not produce a sensation, he couldn't tell what would; he put them all into the post, with his own hands, and bent his steps to the water-side; where, according to previous arrangement, a boat was to be in waiting for him at all hours of the night.

The streets were entirely empty; and though, in going from the post-office to the quay, he had to pass through some of the meanest and worst in the place, Carruthers

met with no molestation till he was almost abreast of a steep flight of stone steps, the commencement of a foot-way to one of the parish churches, in the upper part of the town. Thereabouts he discerned a dark, broad, square figure, dressed as it seemed in a sailor's jacket and trowsers, who trudged on deliberately towards him. Bentley remembering the accounts he had heard of nightly quarrels and riots, crossed the street on purpose to avoid this man; but when he perceived that the other, who was ahead of him considerably, did the same, he by no means thought it incumbent on himself to go one step more out of his way.

Carruthers saw that the fellow meant to jostle him; and the jostle took place accordingly: but our friend being prepared for the event, stood on his guard, received the shock on the point of his projected elbow, and the aggressor had the worst of it. Lieutenant Carruthers would have been well pleased, now, to have pursued his course quietly; but the other man turned about and followed him with gross abuse

and threats; and, as he gained upon him, and seemed resolved to persevere, Bentley halted.

"Who are you?" cried the fellow in the blue jacket, accompanying that question with curses upon some of his features, specifically, and his limbs, altogether; "Who are you? strutting about, as if the whole town was your own,—and driving your elbows into people's ribs?"

"Let me recommend to you to make no disturbance, my friend," replied Bentley; "for, whether you are drunk, or quarrelsome, or both——"

He was here interrupted by a blow on the cheek-bone, which sent him reeling from the pavement, and would probably have driven him directly across the street (by no means a wide one), had not his back come in brisk contact with a pump. This support afforded our young officer a momentary opportunity to recollect himself. The sort of occurrence, although for a year and upwards he had never been engaged in any such adventure, was by no means new to

him; and as the fray could not possibly be imputed to any fault of his own, it was with a feeling of something not very unlike pleasure, that he drew off his gloves with a view to repel and punish this unprovoked assault.

But the other followed him up strenuously, and renewed the attack with such spirit, that, for a little while, the assailant flattered himself he was getting on from advantage to advantage; nor did he feel convinced of his error, till two blows full in his face flattened his nose (broke it, as he then thought), and beat him to the ground.

Being but ill versed in the language of "Moulsey Hurst," we do not aspire to give a scientific report of this conflict. It is necessary to observe, however, that though the hero in the jacket and trowsers returned with vigour to the charge, his downfalls became more and more frequent, insomuch that Bentley at last, willing to prevent this continual interruption, grasped him tight with the left hand, pinned him up against his old ally the pump, and be-

laboured him with the other to such purpose, that, in a low tone of voice,—for none louder could he exert,—the man begged for quarter, informing Mr. Carruthers that he had given in.

"Given in! you scoundrel!" cried Bentley. "You fasten a quarrel upon me, without the slightest provocation,—abuse me in the most scurrilous language,—violently attack me when off my guard,—and have the impudence to assume that I am to treat you as if we had agreed to a fair boxing match." His antagonist, with a groan, now uttered some words which sounded like asking pardon. "Be off with you, then!" said Carruthers: "Away!—get home!—vanish! For this night, at least, you will hardly offend any other person who does not meddle with you."

Bentley had received some blows that TOLD in the battle, but nothing of material consequence. Without further impediment he soon gained the water-side, was taken out to his ship, and sailed next day late in the forenoon. Meanwhile Mr. Richard Hol-

tofte, at a very little before daybreak on the succeeding morning, returned to the Rodney, where he went to bed. At the time when he came back, he was dressed in his own clothes, indisputably;—but in a woful plight, and his linen covered with blood. He kept his room for more than twenty-four hours; and the chambermaid who attended him, declared that she never saw such a face in her life, swelled out of all shape, and as green as grass.

The gentleman himself gave but a meagre account of his mishap: he owned, that perhaps he had drank a little too freely; but said, he had no recollection how the scuffle began, or whether he was beaten by soldiers or sailors.

CHAPTER III.

Influenced by wrath and wine, in addition to his natural impudence, Mr. Holtofte, as appeared by the last chapter, had talked to Bentley Carruthers of the high tone with which he should silence his enemies in and near Crowtonglass: but his subsequent conduct looked as if the confidence which he felt, was not quite equal to that which he had boasted. Instead of returning immediately to his former home, he loitered on all through the winter, either in the town where he first landed, or some other part of the west of England, without any ostensible means of living; went to London late in the spring of the following year, and stayed there between ten and eleven months, enjoying himself, as he would have described it (that is to say, having enough money to procure the low and obscure pleasures which

he required); nor was it till April, eighteen hundred and five, that he ascertained, by actual experiment, how utterly mistaken had been his calculations, when, on account of his long absence, he reckoned upon the certain oblivion of all stories to his prejudice in the vicinity of Peterstow. He struggled manfully however,—audaciously, at any rate, against universal slight and opprobrium, during the summer and most of the autumn: he frequently called at Peterstow house, but was either denied admission entirely, or received worse than coldly by every individual belonging to the family, from Spelman the butler up to Lady Annabella herself: and the reason why we stop at Lady Annabella is, not because Mr. Cothelston didn't now detest him equally with the rest; but because, originally beguiled by Alderstoke, he had injudiciously shown the other so much notice before, that he could not in consistency discard him altogether, without some further proofs of his delinquency.

On Thursday, the seventh of November,

in the same year, Squire Cothelston had desired his daughters to be punctual at a nine o'clock breakfast, as he was obliged to attend a justice meeting, eighteen miles off, in the forenoon; convened for the consideration of Mr. Loam the surveyor's proposals about the intended county bridge at Popplewell End. The Squire's discourse during breakfast was divided between the merits of Mr. Loam, whom he represented as the clearest-headed fellow, for a man who talked so much and so fast, that he ever had met with; and the demerits of certain little oblong rolls, which he reprobated for being bitter, affirming, how different they were in his own father's time, and how famous the house had been, in better days, for that particular article: thus insidiously leading others to draw the inference, that the rolls had been good thirty-three years before, and invariably bitter ever since.

Miss Cothelston here asked her mother some question about the furniture in the saloon. "You remind me, my dear," said Lady Annabella, "to my great annoyance,

that Mrs. and the three Miss Trepheagues are coming to dinner, without our having one human soul to meet them."

"Send over for Rupert Ullesbey," observed Clara.

Her ladyship looked as if she had a general impression that it would not do, but without any distinct idea why.

"What are they about with the hedge there?" said her husband; his eyes being fixed just then upon the window.

"Mr. Ullesbey is not come back yet," observed Mary Mac-Eure.

"I am absolutely positive," replied Clara, "that he appointed this very day for his return: and there is a reasonable chance therefore, of his being at home in time for our dinner."

"What are they about with that laurel hedge?" cried the Squire, once more: but his niece alone paid any attention to him, who looked out also, only, however, to protest that she could not imagine. "They'll tear it to pieces!" he continued, in much indignation, and hastened out of the room.

"He has, really, a good income now," said Jaqueline, still talking about Mr. Ullesbey; "and might live, one would think, in a pleasanter as well as a larger house, than the place that Mr. Alderstoke had."

"Perhaps he could not meet with a better," returned Miss Mac-Eure, smiling, "at an equally short distance from Peterstow park."

"You are pleased to be complimentary, Mary," said Miss Cothelston, "for which, I suppose, I must say something civil in my turn: but, in fact, his increasing rage for shooting and hunting will sufficiently account——"

"Ha, ha, ha! I do admire that most excessively," cried Jaqueline. "Thank you, Clara. Ha, ha! Thank you a million times!"

"There is a vast deal to be laughed at, I dare say," replied the eldest, "if I had the good fortune to comprehend it."

"How did you know, my dear, that I alluded to you?" said Mary, laughing nearly

as much as her cousin, and provoking Clara the more, from her unavailing endeavours to stifle her laughter.

"Spelman is an old servant at Peterstow, and, in some points, a man of sense," observed Mr. Cothelston, who re-entered the parlour at this minute; "but he never can do things with moderation. If his news, or half his news, be true,—let 'em have their laurel,—let them wear laurels, in heaven's name, from the scullion upwards, all through the house! But that 's the worst of servants; they can form no judgment upon a rumour; and the first report they hear,—away goes Spelman,—stops every body's business,—gives a general license for idleness and rejoicing, and turns all the servants loose upon that hedge, where the trees are but scanty at all times, —hauling and tearing, just like so many hounds upon a carcass."

"Is there, though, any notion of good news, Sir?" said Mary.

"Sure am I," cried Jaqueline, "it will not come before it is wanted; for I am tired

to death of hearing my father groan about the Austrians every day, from the time we get the paper, to the time we go to bed."

"How can any thing be known before the mail comes in?" said Clara.

"I am desirous to tell you what I have heard,—but if you all talk at once it is impossible," replied the Squire. "Young Brooks, the miller, left London yesterday by the earliest morning coach; and he says, that within five minutes of their setting off, a person who represented himself as coming from the Admiralty, announced that the French and Spanish combined fleets had been totally defeated near the Straits of Gibraltar, with a loss of eighteen sail of the line!"

"Should this report turn out to be true, Mr. Cothelston," said Lady Annabella, "I conclude you will have the house lighted up; which will be something to do in the evening, and may serve to take those Trepheagues off my hands. I very little concern myself in the events of the war; but if we have taken eighty ships of the line,—

it sounds like a considerable victory indeed."

With a commiserating toss of the head, as if his opinion of her understanding was now settled for ever, the Squire turned away; and on hearing a servant in the hall, asked if his horse was ready, and set out for the county meeting.

Before he had been absent a quarter of an hour, somebody rang at the court bell as if he was endeavouring to pull it down; and, in overflowing spirits, with all the consequence of a man who has 'news of price,' to communicate, Mr. Rupert Ullesbey was announced. He felt rather disappointed at the discovery that Miller Brooks had been beforehand with him; but was relieved when he found the account of the other to be both short and inaccurate, and that a material, though most melancholy, part of the intelligence, remained to be imparted by himself. Such a damp, indeed, did the event last adverted to cast upon the exultation of the country, that Mr. Cothelston, on his return, assured

them, it would have been difficult to determine whether the squires whom he had met, were for the most part glad or sorry: and so powerful was the sensation produced, that all business remained totally at a stand. The newspapers, he said, had been brought in during the middle of their discussions, with four or five editions in each, and letters half an inch long at the head of their chief columns:—so that, though the surveyor (whom he again described as a remarkably sound-headed man, for one who talked so much and so fast) had harangued for an hour and three quarters,—yet, that nobody much listened to him; and the gentlemen present did not even attempt to settle any thing, but whether the wind had abated when the officer left the fleet, which of our ships were totally dismasted, and how many of the prizes stood a chance of being saved.

Mingled as were expressions of lamentation with the general joy, upon so magnificent an achievement, and the fall of such a commander, the feeling of triumph had still great weight at Peterstow, through the

remainder of this day. The ladies came down to dinner bedecked with laurel: the Squire, finding Mrs. Trepheague vastly better audience than his own family, held forth, to his entire satisfaction: the house was illuminated from top to bottom;—ale distributed upon the lawn in front;—"Rule Britannia" performed by the whole church choir, and many others both of the villagers and the Cothelston family—and the Miss Trepheagues were enraptured with the singing and huzzaing; with every body out of doors, and every body in doors; and with Rupert Ullesbey in particular.

On perusing an account of transactions, such as this story treats of, which occupied nearly ten years from their commencement to their ultimate completion, we cannot but suspect (judging by our own practice) that people pass over a great deal entirely, and read a great deal more very cursorily and inattentively; which makes it necessary for us, now and then, to repeat various occurrences: for instance, the fact of Mr. Holtofte having persuaded Benjamin Brooks, the grazier, that he had been in-

strumental in persuading Mr. Cothelston to place his son (the miller lately spoken of) in his present line of business. This effort of friendship, too, was supposed to be exerted at a time when Brooks had been attacking Mr. Holtofte's character—on which, in truth, he thought as ill as possible—without compunction or reserve.

Not but Master Brooks believed the other to be solely actuated by views of self-interest in what he had done, only he could not exactly define the nature of those views; and in the mean time, his conscience perpetually suggesting to him, that he had been acting injuriously by one who had done him an essential favour; he resolved to stand by Dick Holtofte, in the neighbourhood, to the last moment that prudence permitted; and how nearly that period was drawing to a close, will be seen by the events of Tuesday, the twelfth of November, in the following week. On that afternoon, old Brooks gave a dinner to his son the miller, with his wife, and two of her sisters; in addition to whom—(but by the

way, we first should have mentioned Mrs. Brooks the elder, she being also in presence) was one individual, who, although used occasionally to society of a very different description, would, if things had gone right with him, have experienced as much enjoyment under these circumstances as any of the company about him. It was nearly half past three, the maid had taken away the dishes, and no scanty allowance of punch had already been quaffed; when young Brooks declared, that whether the women chose to stay or not, he must be at home by five punctually; being obliged to take the town in his way—"where," said he, "I've got a bit of a job to do, that's been on my mind for these three days; and I doubt I should now be setting my face towards Crowtonglass."

"Look to the door, Nancy," cried his father; "for, by Jericho, nobody stirs out of this place till he's drank Sir —— ——" here followed the health of a certain naval officer, who had abundantly contributed his share to the successes of that glorious period.

"How many has he nabb'd of the runaways?" said the miller, filling his glass.

"Four more, by to-day's paper, my boy; and every one on 'em French!"

"To my thinking," observed old Mrs. Brooks, "we get five or six fresh ships by every post as comes in. The French is our ship-builders, as Jemmy Roper says."

"Ah! but we shall lose all, I'm afeard, that was taken on the twenty-first," cried the young miller:—"what ship was their admiral aboard? The Trinidada—hey?"

"No, that's never a French name," replied his father.

"'Twas the Buck—and something—" said old dame Brooks.

"The Buck and nonsense!"

"The Buck and Tar, I tell ye: so Jemmy Roper says," she replied.

"Curse Jemmy Roper! what should he know about foreign languages?"

"The Buck and Tower*," said the son eagerly.

* Unless the "Bucentaure" be here meant, we are at a loss to explain this part of the conversation.

"Ay, faith, that's something like it," returned the grazier; "but call her what you will—she's done for—she's wreck'd and gone."

"And upon my life, I must be gone too," said the miller, "if I mean to get my business over to-night."

"Then, since George is off," observed old Brooks, "your party may as well follow a'ter, mistress; for I've got somewhat that I want to talk to this gentleman about by our own selves." Dame Brooks was well aware that she had no choice in the matter; so grabbling up a handful of nuts, she, her daughters, and gossips, left the two men to their secrets.

"There can be little doubt," said the grazier, stretching himself from his seat, and feeling with his foot, whether the door was fairly shut, "that the part you take will be the prudent one, and the deep one, and all that. But what I say is—ar'n't it the time now, for you to come to a resolution one way or t'other? Have you any hopes of the Squire standing your friend?"

"None; but he can do me no mischief."

"That's well," replied Brooks; "and now, master Holtofte, if you'll take my counsel——"

"'Tis information I want, rather than advice," cried the other. "They say, forsooth, that I was occasionally seen lurking in the Peterstow wood of a night, during all that noise, and those foolish reports, more than four years ago. Now I ask—who says so? name me the man."

"If you will take my advice," repeated the grazier,—nay, don't be hasty, my friend, you can't tell yet what my advice is. I only mean to say, that however these matters may turn out, there can be no harm just at present in mixing up another tumbler of punch."

This recommendation (now that his counsels were better apprehended) had its weight with Mr. Holtofte, who was nevertheless so much disturbed at the crisis which his own fortunes had reached, that after he had poured in the spirits, he forgot

in his agitation, most, if not all, of the lighter ingredients.

"You know why I ought to be grateful," said Brooks, "and I hope you believe that I have a regard for you." Holtofte nodded, but said nothing; the suspicions which he had lately entertained of his host, being renewed by those words. "Now the way to help your friend," continued the grazier, "is to get at once upon a thorough understanding with him; for, how can you make the jacket easier (as Pringle says), unless you find out where it strains a man?"

"To be sure," replied Holtofte.

The grazier hemmed three or four times, took a more serious pull at his beverage, and resumed; "You remember how all the fools and old women about here, had taken up a queer notion that something wonderful was a-brewing, near upon the place where that foreigner fellow—— "

"I have already mentioned the circumstance, myself," cried Holtofte impatiently, "with the addition, that I am now accused of having been concerned in those nightly

meetings; and what I wish to know, is the name of my accusers, and the nature of their charges against me."

Here Brooks shook his head, intimating, as briefly as he could, that he had no precise knowledge upon either point; of which, Mr. Holtofte did not believe a syllable. After a long pause in the conversation, an interval that was employed by both in procuring the same refreshment.

"If I am to obtain no information when I most need it," said Holtofte, "from a man, whom, in my humble line, I have been always forward to serve; perhaps at least he will be friendly enough to give me his opinion, how far I incur any immediate danger by remaining in this neighbourhood."

"Whether any harm in the long run, is likely to befall you, Mr. Holtofte, you have the best means of judging: but my firm belief is, that if you don't scud for it to-night, you'll be in the county gaol to-morrow!"

"For what?" cried the other with great irritation; "for having been seen five years ago in Mr. Cothelston's woods?"

There however he again found the grazier impenetrable: Brooks stuck to his professed ignorance of any particular charge to be preferred against him, and another silence ensued of nearly five minutes duration.

"Then, I conclude, you advise me to fly the country?" Mr. Brooks expressed his assent, by a knowing wink. "And I tell you, that I shall do no such thing," said Holtofte.

"But you're not going," cried the grazier; "stay and take t'other glass."

"I thank you, Master Brooks; but if your counsels were sincere, there could be no time for me to lose."

"Don't I say, that I may be of service to you?"

"In what way?"

"Why, as I told you before, we must first understand each other," replied Brooks; "and you must let me know, in sound

sober truth, how much you were able to find out about Mr. Mac-Eure, and his circumstances, and property, and that, when you went over to him in America."

"Mr. Brooks," said the other as drily and coldly as possible, "I wish you a good evening." Nor would any further entreaties (had they been made, which they were not) have availed to detain him a moment longer.

He walked home directly, with sufficient matter for meditation; and there seems some reason to imagine, that, in spite of his recent declaration to the contrary, he might have absconded on the succeeding day; but the peril happened to be more urgent than he would believe upon Brooks's warning; and he was apprehended that very night for a capital felony.

CHAPTER IV.

WE last parted from Bentley Carruthers when he sailed for the East Indies in the fall of the year eighteen hundred and three: almost immediately upon his arrival in which quarter of the world, he was sent with his regiment so far to the northward of our settlements, that his communication with friends at home (however regularly kept up to the utmost of his power) became of necessity infrequent and precarious.

Intervals elapsed of many months at a time, during which, to their extreme discomfort and sorrow, his parents were never relieved by the sight of his hand-writing: they trembled at the perusal of every gazette relating to Eastern affairs, and severely reproached themselves, or, more properly speaking, each other, because the whim of

their only hope for a profession that, not only in the ordinary course of things, must separate him almost constantly from them, but distressed them with unceasing alarms on his account, had not from the first been peremptorily resisted.

In this state of things, Mrs. Carruthers (for her husband was nearly bed-ridden and never left his room) derived more comfort from the society of Miss Mac-Eure, than from that of any other person on earth,—as far as she chose to indulge herself with that gratification. Nor is it unadvisedly that we have used the latter qualifying expression, since, though in her heart she loved Mary dearly, and thought her the first of human beings, because she had been preferred by her own darling son ; Mrs. Carruthers was a woman of a very peculiar temper ; sufficiently proud too ; and never could she get over a pang, which the idea of the connexion gave her, particularly when she recurred to the subject in Miss Mac-Eure's absence. This feeling, even during their intercourse, Mary was quick enough to dis-

cover, and an occasional coolness being thus produced between them, prevented the mutual satisfaction and delight that would have cheered both their lives, had they associated quite confidentially, without prejudice on the one side, or suspicion on the other. Still, they saw each other pretty frequently, and never failed of pleasure, more or less, when they did meet.

One Saturday evening, not half a year before the occurrences spoken of in our last chapter, Mrs. Carruthers and her young friend talked together, much more warmly and openly than perhaps they had ever hitherto done; and Bentley was freely mentioned by his mother,—not indeed, as if she considered Mary's interest in him to be equally great with her own, but as if she acknowledged such a friendship to subsist between them, that the topic was allowable, and could not be otherwise than acceptable.

Miss Mac-Eure liked this proceeding: she listened to all her partial anecdotes of Bentley Carruthers, with a willing ear and

retentive memory: she read over his letters (the few that had been received) with such deep attention, that the old lady, who wanted to be talking again, grew absolutely impatient: and when Mary returned, very late to Peterstow, she was charmed with her visit; she flattered herself that at length she completely understood Mrs. Carruthers, and thought her in some points excessively like her son, as long as she lay awake, and could think of any thing.

Mary Mac-Eure had formed no romantic or unreasonable estimate of the world; she constantly restrained the flights of imagination, and when events seemed to be going favourably with her, took more pains than is apt to be the case with people of her age, to prepare herself for a reverse: notwithstanding which salutary habits, she was no less disturbed than astonished at hearing, within a fortnight of this delectable evening passed in the society of Mrs. Carruthers, that her son Bentley was about to be married at Madras. These tidings were first imparted to her by her cousin Clara,

and in the most disagreeable manner; with hypocritical sympathy, the offensive word "pity" upon her tongue, and something approaching to a smile of derision upon her countenance.

Jaqueline's behaviour was altogether different; she confirmed indeed the rumour, —as far as to mention that it had reached her,—but trusted it might not be true: adding, very becomingly, that she hoped so, for the sake of his character and consistency, alone; as she could not doubt for a moment (a little heated, probably, at the recollection of his conduct by herself), that, supposing the story accurate, Mary would, without an effort, forget a man of so contemptibly fickle a disposition, or weak a mind. The only object of Miss Mac-Eure, now, was to put an end to suspense: and having found out, from her younger cousin, that Rupert Ullesbey had met with the person who brought the report into the county, with her accustomed decision, Mary inquired about it of him; and was informed, that he certainly had seen the gentleman

who said so ; and that, when the latter left Madras, every thing was understood to be arranged for the wedding. Ullesbey even endeavoured to repeat the lady's name,—Peddar, or Weddar,—he could n't exactly say which. Such a piece of information, to a heroine of the old stamp, must have been nothing less than fatal : her peace of mind would have been destroyed as well as her appetite : if she had retired to her bower, and taken up a volume of her favourite Petrarch—even from his page her thoughts must have wandered, while her lute, as a matter of course, would lose all power of imparting even a temporary solace to her woes.

But Mary Mac-Eure—though perhaps in point of sentiment she ought to have been—was not so bad as all this : for which want of feeling we can only assign the following reasons. Her opinions were not hasty, but, when once formed, not easily shaken ; and of Bentley Carruthers she had latterly established a very high opinion. He was quite at liberty, doubtless, but he had

declared his affection for her, in terms which could hardly be mistaken; and despite of the plausibility and particularity of this account, she did not, on more mature consideration, believe one word of it.

Some positive assurances, however, of its falsehood would have been desirable; and concluding, that, after her late very friendly interview with Mrs. Carruthers, the latter would give a fair and kind construction to her motives, she determined at once to call at Haddesley, and find out directly whether his father and mother had received any communication upon the subject.

She did go there accordingly: twice she called in the course of one week; and twice was Mrs. Carruthers denied to her. This was somewhat vexatious, but Mary would not suppose it to be any thing but accident; and, to ensure herself against a third disappointment, she sent over a line, proposing to come to Haddesley the next day, at a stated hour.

That the answer to this application implied acquiescence, cannot be denied; but

so short and cold were the terms of the note, that nothing but the reception which Miss Mac-Eure afterwards experienced, could possibly be colder.

Mary was at first confounded, and then extremely hurt, by this treatment: indignation, however, at last enabled her to say what she had intended. She mentioned Bentley's attentions to her, the service he had done for her, and the expressions in which he had repeatedly assured her of his regard and affection; although, at the same time, she thought it right to add a detail of what had passed on the day before he quitted that part of the world; and affirmed, in language the most explicit, that nothing which could be construed into an engagement, by either party, had ever taken place between them.

"If so," said the old lady, drawing up, and foreseeing the question which was to follow next, "I own, I cannot discover what right Miss Mac-Eure has, after two years' interval, to inquire whether my son

may have any views of altering his condition."

"Right! Madam;" cried Mary, colouring to her fingers' ends, and in the next moment turning so pale, that Mrs. Carruthers was shocked in spite of herself, at having spoken so harshly. "Did I say I had any right? Did I lay claim to any? Miserably as I have deceived myself in reckoning upon your friendship, Madam, I scarce can think that you really mean to use me so very unkindly. God bless you, Mrs. Carruthers: this is probably the last time that I shall set foot within this house."

"Nay,—but I never designed to grieve you——"

"Do not trouble yourself, Mrs. Carruthers," said Mary, on seeing the other rise.

"My dear, I was not going to ring the bell;—on the contrary, I would endeavour to persuade you that, under all circumstances, you will ever be welcome here, as a——"

"I sincerely wish you happy, Ma'am," replied Miss Mac-Eure; and stopped her

at once, by leaving the room that instant, and waiting below in the hall till her chaise was brought to the door. When she contrasted this return from Haddesley with the delightful anticipations indulged after her last visit, Mary bitterly bewailed the strange caprices which she was now almost ready to attribute to the whole Carruthers family; and felt an oppression of heart, that no former trial of her life had been able to affect her with. For some time, for several weeks indeed, her struggles with a feeling of despondency which whispered to her that she was one of those ill-fated individuals, whose every view in this world is to end in disappointment, were of little avail: but, by degrees, her confidence in Bentley's worth and sincerity began, in defiance of all that had occurred, to revive.

Days, weeks, and months passed away, and no confirmation of his marriage arrived: Jaqueline took exception to certain parts of the story: Rupert Ullesbey declared stoutly against the whole:—while Mary flattered herself she had attained to such a

pitch of philosophy, that, happen what might, no event hereafter would have power materially to shake her peace of mind.

Such were her notions, on Wednesday, November the thirteenth (the day succeeding that hospitable entertainment we lately spoke of, given by Benjamin Brooks, the grazier, to his friend Mr. Holtofte), as she sat in her own room, having two letters to finish before the carriage came to take her to Westerwolde; for thither she intended to go, in consequence of an account received on the Tuesday night, mentioning that her mother's illness, which, though considered as but slight, was already of more than three weeks' duration, had assumed a worse appearance within the last twelve hours. Just as she had directed one of her letters, she heard somebody at a distance riding very hard, who seemed to approach the house; and thought, as well as she could judge from the window near which she sat, that it must be Rupert Ullesbey: nor did her eyes deceive her; he came full speed towards the court gate, galloping as

if he fled for his life. Mary was not displeased to see him; she knew that he and Carruthers had corresponded during one year at least after the latter got to India; and having for some time made her mind up to ask Ullesbey fairly, why the intended intercourse had been discontinued, she determined to do so this very morning.

In a few minutes, however, such a variety of clamour struck her ears, that she was sure some most extraordinary sensation had been excited in the family. Males and females were vociferating together;—the women, in a high key, expressive of astonishment or dismay;—though no word could she distinguish but her uncle's name, whom they seemed, urgently and universally, to be calling for. Soon she heard the voice of Rupert above all the rest, and a bustle upon the stairs, as if he and all the men in the house were diverting themselves by chasing each other from the kitchen to the garrets and back again. The first object that Mary saw on opening her room door, was one of the men-servants upon the

landing-place; "Laud-a-mercy!" cried he to somebody below him, "if here is n't Miss Mac-Eure at home all the while!" Then addressing himself to her, "Have you seen my master, Ma'am, since breakfast?" and without staying for an answer, he ran down stairs again, faster than he had come up.

Upon this Mary called to Rupert, whom she now perceived in the hall below; but he vanished so instantaneously that he appeared to avoid her on purpose. Excessively surprised, and not altogether free from alarm, she began at first to follow them,—but stopped at one of the stair-case windows, on seeing that both her cousins, without any thing even upon their heads, were walking with Mr. Ullesbey on the grass before the house, and talking all at once with gestures of the utmost eagerness. Mary grew more uneasy every moment, and hastening out to join them, knew directly by Rupert's looks, that what he had to relate, was as important to her as it could be to any of the rest; although he obviously did not like to enter upon the subject; and

only asking if she still intended to go to Westerwolde, advised her very earnestly to wait and see her uncle before she set out.

Jaqueline, however, determined at all events to keep her no longer in suspense, and returned with her to the house. As they entered at one door, Mr. Cothelston, who had that moment come in by another, nodded to them, so as to intimate that he was apprized of every thing ; and dismissing his daughter, he took Mary into the library, where they remained together for three quarters of an hour, or longer ; and when the conference was over, he encouraged her on every consideration to proceed to her mother with all possible speed. Miss MacEure, stunned as it were, and in a sort of stupor, at the intelligence which she had just heard, took notice of nothing and nobody on her road ; and had turned into the lane leading to Westerwolde house, before she could form the least conception what measures she ought to adopt, or how she should communicate to her mother a shocking circumstance, which she foresaw must

affect her seriously, and perhaps dangerously. The maid Hannah however, who met her at the door, would not permit her to go immediately into the usual apartment; for Mrs. Mac-Eure's bed (she informed her) had been removed into that room. "Her bed!" cried Mary; "you don't mean to say that she keeps her bed?"

The other looked very blank: "You are not come before you were wanted, Miss Mary, I can tell you; but you must have patience now, while I go and prepare mistress; any new shock might be terrible bad for her."

Different causes had by this time afflicted Miss Mac-Eure to such a degree, that for some minutes she was quite lost and overwhelmed: she sat down, and seemed insensible to what Hannah said; but did as she was desired, and having drank part of a glass of water, showed by signs that she wished for any information which could be given her.

"Stop a little, Ma'am," said the maid; "stop a little. You feel yourself better now?"

"A good deal," she replied..

"All the fore part of last week," continued Hannah, "things was on the mending hand with us; but when Dr. Timpson came on the Thursday night, he would have it, there was more fever than the day before."

"Doctor who?" said Mary.

"Never mind; he is only a pottecary I know," returned the other; "but we call 'em all doctors here—the whole tribe of 'em. He said there was more fever than there should be, and scolded mistress for talking so fast; but, bless you, that was nothing to what she talked after he was gone. She ran on, rambling in such a way, that I didn't know what to make of it, and though I arn't very soon overset, I got uncomfortablish myself; and as mistress had but an indifferent night, I was a doubting about sending off to Peterstow for you, Miss Mary; only what's the use, thinks I, of frightening her, and about nothing perhaps after all? so I hired old Grace Potter, out of the village, to take turns with me in

setting up with mistress of a night. But I wished with all my heart, I'd cut my tongue out, afore I asked her to do any such thing, for she's a careless, foolish, drinking, gossiping body; and what d'ye think she's been and done?"

"Pray tell me, tell me at once," cried Mary.

"Why, the truth is, ever since last Thursday night, my mistress has either been fretting and complaining, or in that there rambling kind of way, as I was a saying to you; and in the middle of these troubles what does that silly old fool (Lord forgive me!) Grace Potter do, this blessed morning, but tells her all this sad business from beginning to end, of Mr. Holtofte being took up, and every thing that's come out about him."

"It was enough to have caused her instant death," said Miss Mac-Eure. "Send that woman out of the house, Hannah, before she occasions any more mischief. Without any scolding, or harsh language, remember; but send her away, the minute

after you have let my mother know that I am here, and that I mean to remain here."

Although warned by her servant of the great change in Mrs. Mac-Eure's appearance, within the last few days, Mary's sensations were little short of horror, on being shown into her mother's room. "Sit down, my love; why do you look so dismal?" said the latter. "A month's illness has worn me, and altered me, I have no doubt; but I shall come round again, sha'n't I?"

"My dearest mother, I trust you will."

"You do not speak as if you believed it, Mary. Give me your hand; does mine feel feverish?"

"Rather feverish."

"What do you think of me? tell me the plain truth."

"I fear you have been much agitated this morning," said Mary.

"Yes; an hour ago I thought I was dying; but many worse than I am have recovered, you know."

"I will not suppose you to be dying, though you are certainly very ill, and there must be danger," replied Miss Mac-Eure,

falling on her knees by the bed. "Repent, my dear, dear mother! repent of your sins; the best of mankind have but too many, for which they stand in need of pardon: collect your mind, and pray, while time is yet allowed you."

"Pray for me, Mary; I am weaker than you imagine."

Mary offered up her prayers aloud, with such intenseness and fervour of supplication, that the tears burst forth continually; and her whole soul seemed to be engaged in the duty. "I find myself wandering," said her mother; "my child, this is a dreadful story."

Mary well knew to what she now alluded; but had no means of leading her from her course of thought.

"Tell me one thing, my love,—has my brother Cothelston long known of the charge that was to be brought against that man?"

"Most assuredly not. My uncle told me, before I left his house, that the whole had been investigated by another magistrate, a clergyman in the neighbourhood,

with the assistance of some persons who were careful, for many reasons, that nothing of what was impending, should be even whispered at Peterstow—— Mother, mother, you are worse again—shall I call for Hannah?"

"My beloved child," said Mrs. MacEure, "I have done you an injury with those Carruthers people;" then suddenly flying off from her subject, "That depraved inhuman wretch!" she cried: "this room, this very room is the place. Here they terrified me with their wickedness and barbarous impostures, and from that hour my mind has been ever disturbed." Her voice now grew loud and shrill, and she was beginning to talk unintelligibly, when, to Mary's great relief, the medical man who attended her, arrived. He did not like the alteration in her look, and asked Miss MacEure apart, whether Mr. Cothelston would wish to see his sister, for that no time should be lost. Mary, excessively frightened, proposed to send likewise for a physician from Fynndal, to which the other made no ob-

jection, but seemed to augur little benefit from the measure. A man, however, from the Swan inn, was immediately despatched to Peterstow; though, as he would not get there till late at night, they had no expectation of seeing Mr. Cothelston before the following morning. The apothecary stayed above two hours in the house, during which time, Mrs. Mac-Eure having exhausted her strength, had ceased to speak altogether, and appeared to be dozing when he left them.

Mary watched by her mother's bedside, from three in the afternoon till half past eleven at night; but Hannah then insisted upon relieving her, and observing that she had eaten nothing since breakfast, and would make herself ill, just when her services were most wanted, she persuaded her to leave the sick room, and take some tea and refreshment, which she had prepared in another apartment, on the opposite side of the hall. The latter was a spacious, but low and dismal room, communicating between the hall and the kitchen; and it

gave but an indifferent sample of the Westerwolde establishment. The whole furniture consisted in a deal table and two chairs of the same; and the damp black walls, and ceiling bedaubed with sundry names and initials, traced out in smoke or written in charcoal (the only surviving memorials of many an idle, good-for-nothing menial, belonging to that house in its more flourishing days), were half lighted at the present juncture, by one meagre candle, scarce worthy of a better name than a rushlight, in a tin candlestick, of dimensions equal to any pewter plate in the parish. But a fresh faggot lately thrown upon the fire, now began to burn up blithely, and gave more comfort to Mary, than any thing that she either ate or drank, though she compelled herself to do both: after which she leant back in her chair, expecting and desiring to be called in to her mother every minute. The distressing occurrences of the last twelve hours had followed each other so fast, that, instead of thinking them over, she remained in a sort of confusion of mind

which prevented her from reflecting with any distinctness at all. Twice or thrice, she thought that somebody was moving round her chair; she shut her eyes to avoid growing giddy; and exhausted as well with bodily as mental exertion, slept for nearly an hour in that very uneasy situation. From such sleep, Mary awoke in some alarm and great perplexity: at first she could not perceive where she was—the wood fire had sunk down to a few live embers, which imparted no light whatever, and the dying flame of the candle, after affording her a partial gloomy view of the apartment, went out entirely.

A recollection, however, of her mother's awful state soon came across her mind, and she wished to be once more by her bedside. But she had been sitting all this time in Hannah's room, at the farthest distance from the entrance; she was almost wholly unacquainted with that part of the house; and in utter darkness it would have been no easy matter fo her to find her way to the door. Having observed some wood piled in

one corner of the room before she went to sleep, Mary now got up to search for it, in hopes of restoring her fire; but while thus employed, she fancied, without at all liking the notion, that the house-door, the great door in the hall, had opened softly; and by the perceptible rush of the wind, which penetrated in a moment to the inmost recesses of that dreary and dilapidated building, she was convinced, most unpleasantly, that she had made no erroneous conjecture.

The door closed again almost immediately; and Mary suspected that—Mrs. Mac-Eure being much worse—Hannah had run out for assistance, and purposely slipped away in that quiet manner: but this idea was succeeded by the far more dreadful one, of Hannah having fallen asleep, and her mother having left her bed, in a fit of delirium.

She had no time, however, for dwelling upon either of those apprehensions. Some one, or more persons, though they might attempt (and they evidently did attempt) to conceal the sound of their steps, were

within the house-door at that instant; for she heard them walking about the hall.

This crisis required discretion and fortitude; qualities, in which Mary Mac-Eure was far from deficient; and thinking of nothing now, but how she might preserve her mother, whose life she justly supposed would be sacrificed by any additional cause of agitation,—she felt out her way to the door of the room.

After some cessation the sound of the footsteps was just then renewed, accompanied by heavy though partially smothered sighs; and Mary hoped she had deceived herself in imagining that she heard the words "dead," or "death," very plainly pronounced.

She ventured into the hall, nevertheless, and was crossing with all due precaution to the same side of the house where her mother lay, when she stumbled against something that opposed her progress,—and, to save herself from falling, caught hold of a man by the breast of his coat. "Heaven defend us!" cried a voice sufficiently familiar

to her, in mixed accents of terror and vexation; "who is here? and what part of the place have I got into?"

"My dear uncle! is it possible?"

"What! Mary? How is all this? Do they commonly leave the outer door of this house open all night long?" Then explaining his situation, "Matthew was sent on," said Mr. Cothelston, "with the horses to the Swan; and in trying to find the bell, I laid hold of the latch, and the door came open immediately."

"Hannah probably forgot to look to it, in all our confusion and distress."

"Ay, Mary, distress indeed! I have not spoken an affectionate word to her, poor unhappy thing, for these seven years. But you think she will live?"

"I am sadly afraid about her, uncle Cothelston."

"Don't say so. Heaven forbid,—I will not suppose so. Why are you walking about by yourself in the dark?"

Hannah, who had in truth been asleep, though she never would allow it, by this

time heard the voices, and coming forth with a candle, was as much astonished as Mary had been, at sight of Mr. Cothelston.

"I judged it best to come over to-night," said he; "but I will not believe she's in such very urgent danger. Can I see her?"

"My dear Sir! no," cried Mary, with much quickness. "She required preparation even to see me; and the effect might be instantaneously fatal. Is she sleeping, Hannah?"

"Her brother may go in NOW, Miss Mary; or any body else."

Extremely alarmed at those words, Mary ran to the chamber, and found her mother alive, but, to all appearance, senseless. The others soon followed.

"Sister Clara," said Mr. Cothelston, approaching the bed, "look up, Clara! I would have come to you before, if I could have supposed that you wished to see me. Oh,—Lord forgive us all,—she is dying, indeed. Do you know me, Clara? My only sister,—show, once, that you remember me;

——your dear good daughter will bear me witness, that, long and long ago, if I could but have thought it would have been acceptable——"

But Mary stopped him, as his distress increased, and eagerly confirmed what she well knew to be true: whilst her unhappy mother never spoke another rational word, and died early in the afternoon of the succeeding day.

CHAPTER V.

The approaching trial of Richard Holtofte for an offence, the nature of which interested the whole county from highest to lowest, became almost the sole subject of conversation for several months after Mrs. MacEure's death.

Many anecdotes were now recollected which went to support the charges against him; many more invented; and with a too common abuse of the free press of this land, defamatory lives and histories of him were published in the county papers, not to mention long detailed accounts of his crime, without the least knowledge on the part of the writers, whether any one of those particulars would be proved: till so universal a prejudice was excited, that, when the assizes came on, scarcely twelve men were

to be found, who had not resolved upon his conviction. This feeling showed itself beyond all doubt, in the course of the trial: for, though the judge told them distinctly, that there was no evidence sufficient to warrant them in pronouncing the prisoner guilty; the jury went out of court, and remained lingering and wrangling for upwards of two hours. His lordship then thought it his duty to send for them back, and repeat the same observations; when, at length, they agreed to a reluctant verdict in Holtofte's favour.

The character of the latter, however, was by no means cleared in the estimation of any single individual present: and the magistrate who had committed him, after indefatigable pains in investigating the business, said openly in all companies, that if he could have succeeded in procuring the liberation of one Waugh from a French prison, things must have taken a very different turn; he (the magistrate) having made out, most decidedly, that Holtofte undertook his late expedition to America for no other purpose, than the converting

some goods into money which he had become possessed of under the most suspicious circumstances. The affair therefore ended, by Mr. Holtofte being once more thrown upon society; though not the sort of society which he had principally been used to; for in that district he was not only shunned, but hooted, and in continual danger of personal injury from the indignation of the Crowtonglass rabble. He took himself off, accordingly; to the general satisfaction of the neighbourhood, and of nobody more than his friend Brooks the grazier: and, as we have been told, but do not vouch for the fact, he first set up a small bookseller's shop and circulating library, at a place called Iccombe on Thames; which concern having failed, he lived obscurely about London, nobody knew how, till nearly five years after this period, when he reappeared for the last time in these parts,—an event which we shall have occasion to notice.

Mr. Cothelston, though no chicken himself in point of age, had an aunt living, it

seems, one Mrs. Eleonora Cothelston, a hearty old woman of eighty, who resided at Stoneavon, a very well known city in the west of England; whither (immediately after Mrs. Mac-Eure's funeral) her daughter was sent, on a visit to her great aunt, in accomplishment of a promise of long standing.

Miss Mac-Eure had most urgent reasons for wishing to be absent from Peterstow during the agitation of all this business about Richard Holtofte: and, with her customary felicity,—though she made use of no arts beyond the common effect of sweet temper and a spirit of accommodation,—she so gained on the affections of this ancient maiden lady, that the latter complained heavily of having been cheated hitherto out of the company of the most agreeable of her nieces; and added, that now she had got her, she would keep her for a twelvemonth at least.

In this resolution she was indulged, after an ineffectual, but very warm and sincere opposition from Peterstow, on the part of

her uncle and Jaqueline, and a remark from Lady Annabella, that she felt rather a curiosity to see how the house would go on so long without Mary.

Of Clara's regret we do not say much; for she had no mighty objection, generally speaking, to the removal of her cousin from their circle: but having taken it into her head that she herself was Mrs. Eleonora's favourite of the family, and likewise admitted some wandering notions about jewels, or something, which the old lady (who must die one day or other) would have to bequeath;—Clara did not altogether enter into the humour of leaving so many opportunities of recommending herself to be improved by Mary. These matters being premised, for the purpose of explaining why Miss Mac-Eure was absent from Peterstow just at this time,—we may direct our whole attention to the views of Clara Cothelston (for such she undoubtedly had) upon both Rupert Ullesbey and Sir Poole Preston,—or rather, upon the first, in default of her succeeding with the latter. Ullesbey, who,

in consequence of what had passed between them several years before, as well as of much recent observation on the deportment of Miss Cothelston in her own family, now full well comprehended that young lady's character, and was therefore in as little danger of being seriously attached to her, as of falling in love with her mother,—did not see why he had less right to divert himself at her expense, than she had to play a cunning, mean, and heartless game with him.

He accordingly appeared to be gratified by her advances for a renewal of their original intimacy: he listened, with seeming approbation, to the affected tone of feeling in which she was accustomed to express all her deeper remarks, and indeed too many of her common-places; and pretty successfully concealed his disgust, when, in a candid fit, she either laid traps for compliments, by confessing her own faults, or thought to make her conversation interesting by ill-natured observations upon their mutual

acquaintance; of few, or none of whom, she ever spoke favourably by any chance.

It must be owned, that Rupert was often rather tired of her, than diverted by her; but what could he do, poor fellow! He had little or no employment in the country; for the altering and new furnishing of Mr. Alderstoke's late residence had long been finished, which necessarily stopped his main source of occupation: besides which, at the time we speak of, Mary Mac-Eure was away, whom he liked exceedingly; though, had she been at Peterstow all the while, we must say, he never would have dreamt of placing his affections upon her, as he knew well, that till the stories of his friend Carruthers' marriage were confirmed, there could be no probability that any human being existing would make the slightest impression in that quarter. To be sure, there was the fair Jaqueline, of whom he every now and then found himself thinking, with as much admiration, to the full, as was prudent, considering that she seemed so odd and careless about every body, and took so

little interest in what went forward, and was so often out of spirits, as to offer no encouragement whatever for any attentions on his part. Rupert had no occasion now, to be eternally borrowing Mr. Cothelston's gig: for, being in good plight, himself, and at little comparative expense about his house and establishment, he kept a pair of horses and a low phaeton of his own; in which vehicle, early in the summer of eighteen hundred and seven, he had the honour of driving Miss Clara Cothelston as far as Molesden, the celebrated seat of Sir Poole Preston, Baronet.

That gay captain of dragoons had been expected this spring on his own domain: and, as the numerous reports of victories obtained in Poland by the Russians during the first half of this year, exalted us at one moment to the highest step of the ladder, only to kick us to the bottom of it in the next; so the news of Sir Poole Preston's probable arrival in the country, announced to Clara in April, and confirmed in May,—had now apparently proved equally delusive.

So things were when Mr. Ullesbey and Miss Cothelston, having arrived at the Molesden lodge, applied for leave to drive through the grounds; and permission was given, not merely with readiness, but respect.

Clara, as they drove easily and agreeably along, looked benignly upon Ullesbey, with an expression of calm delight which seemed to say, that in his society not a wish of her heart remained ungratified;—thinking, all the time, how she should like to be mistress of Molesden house, of Molesden park, and the various other advantages which Sir Poole Preston's wife might fairly aspire to in every company.

"Pascal says," observed Rupert, casting his eyes over the fine domain around him, "Pascal talks of the 'love of poverty;' which is a little beyond me, I own."

"Are you deep in the writings of Blaise Pascal?" said Clara.

"Don't you proceed to examine me," he replied; "for I never pretend to any thing beyond the superficial: but I hope I'm not absolutely unacquainted with the

works of that great man. Now I can conceive patience under poverty; and I can conceive a good Christian to choose and pray for a quiet obscure situation, rather than a post of much temptation; but the love of poverty, for its own sake, I don't profess to comprehend."

"He may not exactly mean all he says," observed Clara.

"That I should be surprised at, in such a man as Pascal. No—he means it all, fast enough; but I want to know how he makes it out: for—the poorer you are, the less you can assist others——hey! Miss Cothelston? That's the way I argue. Put a man down in a town now, a town like Crowtonglass, where there's misery enough, or the deuce is in it; and he'll do more good upon three thousand a year, than three hundred, I apprehend?"

"To be sure he will," said she; "but when a person writes a book, you know, he is to place things in a strong light. Never mind Pascal; one can't pass one's whole life in hunting about for objects of charity.

According to my opinion however, in the common intercourse of the world, the question whether affluence be preferable to a moderate provision, seldom will occur, and for this plain reason, because they will not be compared together. People cannot marry upon nothing in these times, that is decided; then, supposing a sufficiency, the sole question with a woman of any pretensions to delicacy will be—not what a man HAS—but what he IS."

"Ye---s," returned Ullesbey; "yours is a disinterested and dignified way of taking the thing. Conceive however, just for the moment, the appearance of two gentlemen in a neighbourhood, with pretty equal merit, but very unequal incomes. One, for instance, at the head of such a property as we now see on all sides of us, and the other with one third of that fortune at the utmost."

"I am not ambitious," said Clara in her most amiable tone of voice.

When Rupert could command his countenance, for he was strongly inclined to

laugh, he turned to look at her; while she, with great propriety and precisely at the right time, averted her eyes, and fixed them pensively on the fan which lay in her lap.

From this interesting embarrassment she was soon relieved, by their meeting the game-keeper, with whom Ullesbey (rather to his companion's displeasure, who thought she had given him wherewithal to occupy his mind in a very different manner) entered forthwith upon a discussion about some distemper that had got among the Baronet's pointers. "Uncommon unlucky indeed, Sir," said the man, "and that it should have broke out just this month too, when the first thing my master asks to see a-Thursday, will be them dogs."

"On Thursday," cried Clara; "your master on Thursday? Do you say that Sir Poole comes here on Thursday, Mr. Roberts?"

"Yes, he do, Miss."

"You astonish me. I thought it had been settled lately, that he was not to be here this season at all?"

"For that matter, Ma'am, it has been settled these seven or eight times, off and on: but the housekeeper heard again yesterday afternoon, and the day after to-morrow he'll be here for certain."

"Good morning, Roberts," said Rupert, letting the horses go, and resuming his own proper elevated position in the phaeton.

"Good day t' ye, Sir," returned the bold forester.

Miss Clara, as they pranced off towards Sir Poole's park gate, favoured her esteemed friend with not one single observation, good, bad, or indifferent; and they had proceeded more than three parts of the way on their return to Peterstow, before Ullesbey held it worth his while to break a silence, the cause of which he thoroughly understood, and was as thoroughly amused by. "Our thoughts, Miss Cothelston," he at length observed, "are probably occupied with the very same subject."

"I doubt that," said she, somewhat peevishly; "for, to tell you the truth, I was thinking how perpetually my father keeps

teasing me, because I ride about so much with you of a morning; and upon my word, old-fashioned as his notions may be——" there she paused.

"It does not become either of us," added Ullesbey, "to set them at defiance. And indeed I should be unconscionable were I to press you to act against his ideas of decorum, any more; for I've made the best use of my opportunity, and have good reason to be satisfied with our conversation of this morning."

"Satisfied, Sir? In what respect, Sir?"

"Nay, you do not desire me, I presume, to repeat all the discourse; but when comparative degrees of affluence are declared to be no consideration, with a lady of any pretensions to delicacy, why—one cannot but be pleased by so noble a sentiment."

"I have no romance about me, Mr. Ullesbey; not I."

"I never said you had, Miss Cothelston," replied Rupert, as he drove her up to the door of Peterstow house.

CHAPTER VI.

ROBERTS the game-keeper was perfectly right: Sir Poole Preston certainly came to Molesden on the Thursday; and perhaps to console himself for his disagreeable surprise about the pointers, rode over to pay his devoirs to the Cothelstons next morning; among whom, he met with a rapturous greeting from some, a good reception from all, and first, an invitation to dinner; which was so well taken by him, that it soon extended to a farther invitation to pass some time with them.

On the day appointed, the Baronet arrived early: not only before Ullesbey (who of course was to meet him) had left his own house, but before all the ladies had gone to dress; for Miss Jaqueline sat copying a picture—an exceedingly clever one by the

bye, of a fox with cubs in the hollow of a bank, surrounded by thick wood—when Sir Poole was shown into the room.

Misfortunes in the form of disappointment, though they may sour our tempers for a while, prove advantageous, it is hoped and believed, to all but the incurably perverse, in the long run. To Jaqueline Cothelston at least, that observation was strictly applicable; for, since the grief and mortification which her own passions and the conduct of Bentley Carruthers had caused her, though at times a cloud still hovered over her mind; in every important respect her character was considerably altered and ameliorated. Not that any mighty difference appeared in her general address; there was the same blunt sincerity, or, we fear, occasional brusquerie of manner, which, when she kept her temper under no control, had perpetually led her to say every thing that occurred to herself, and consequently, for the most part, disagreeable things to other people: but it was now much softened; she had grown tolerant and good-humoured,

and her whole deportment partook of those improvements. Lastly, although several years older at this juncture than at the commencement of our narrative, her beauty had suffered little or no diminution; and having become more popular, she was almost universally allowed to be more captivating than ever.

So thought, at any rate, that gallant hussar, Sir Poole Preston; who—as we must beg leave to remind the reader—had originally admired (for the word 'loved' was scarcely applicable to either case) the younger of the Miss Cothelstons, the most of the two; though, on discouragement from the former, he had transferred his fluctuating attentions to Clara. Miss Jaqueline, however, now received him with a friendly smile; she seemed amused by the trifling nothings, which, with abundance of lively gesture and confidence, he addressed to her; and when they had mutually retired to prepare for dinner, Sir Poole said to himself as he was tying on his neckcloth, "That girl always hit my fancy. Particularly pretty! and a fine spirited girl too! Unequal, per-

haps, to her sister in conversation, but would show better any where in the world. Whether Jaqueline naturally much liked me, I have some doubts: not a great deal, I suspect: not over-much, to say the truth. But by this time she knows something more of life; and if I was to come forward now, surely she'd never be such a confounded fool——"

Sir Poole Preston generally felt himself in spirits when he sat down to dinner; he liked the operation of dining, with all its circumstances. Being a person of family, and an old baronet, he was usually (in the country at least) a man of precedence among the guests invited, wherever he went, in addition to all the advantages derived from his gay time of life and plentiful fortune. He liked, therefore, the petty ceremonial which ensued when that meal was announced—the call upon him to proceed—the modest hesitation—the oblique bow, and offer of his arm to a lady, and the pleasant remark, with a tendency to a joke, while they were walking down stairs. But never in his life had he partaken of a repast,

with more undisturbed self-satisfaction and serenity, than just at present; for, first of all, he was beginning to grow tired of the army, and well pleased to have quitted all military duties for a month or six weeks. In the next place, it had become a sort of fashion to marry, in his regiment; two of the captains, men of distinguished connexion, but inferior wealth to himself, had married pleasing, amiable young women; and were pronounced by the rest to be lucky fellows, and to live in an enviable and gentlemanlike style, though, of necessity, without much ostentation. The lieutenant-colonel in command had also provided himself with a spouse of peculiar beauty and attractions: whether their felicity was equal to that of either of the former couples, is nothing to us, and indeed seemed as little to Sir Poole, who only considered the admiration which Mrs. Mullendorp commanded wherever she appeared, and determined to create a Lady Preston who should excite an equal or superior sensation. The only remaining question was, from what

family she should be selected; and as the Cothelstons had always made much of him, and he did in truth admire both daughters, though Jaqueline by far the most, he leant strongly to a decision in her favour. At the same time he was willing to persuade himself that he felt for Clara, pitied and esteemed her. He thought she was in love with him, and, with his share of conceit, well he might; for she palpably manœuvred to sit by him at dinner, talked eternally, smiled approbation whenever he opened his lips, and assented with rapture and intuitive acuteness, to the justness of his remarks, before he had half made them. But nothing could she say, and nothing could she do, that went so near to win the Baronet, as certain glances which he saw her, ever and anon, cast across the table towards Rupert Ullesbey, expressive of curiosity, if not anxiety, to know whether he was watching her; and which induced the bold dragoon to believe, that something of attachment having existed in that quarter, the whole hopes and happiness of poor

Rupert lay at his mercy, and depended upon the choice he might make during this eventful visit. Can any one therefore be surprised, if, perfectly at his ease, gratified by a handsome dinner and some very good wine, soothed by flattery, and inflated by vanity, the Baronet should have exceeded his usual privilege of talking nonsense in that house? Whatever he said, produced applause from Clara, a smile from Jaqueline, without his conceiving the slightest idea that she meant to laugh at him, and was observed upon by Mr. Cothelston, with a gravity which perhaps diverted Rupert more than any thing else which occurred in the course of this very amusing scene; while Lady Annabella declared, as she and her daughters left the room, that she always had thought Sir Poole an advantageous neighbour, and a most useful young man to meet any body in the world, but never had observed so much talent about him before. When the ladies were gone, the Baronet became conscious that the full stretch of enjoyment will not do for this world; he

found himself, with spirits exhausted, thrown for entertainment either upon squire Cothelston, from whose powers of conversation he could expect nothing peculiarly exhilarating, or on Rupert Ullesbey, towards whom though he certainly felt himself rather favourably disposed just at this juncture, as befitted a triumphant and generous rival, he could not but despise him in his heart, and look down upon a common kind of young man so utterly ignorant of life and the world. Thus circumstanced, the gallant officer filled nearly a bumper every time he laid hold of the bottle, and soon getting muddled, he grew positive, argumentative, and (though somewhat differently from his usual way) more tiresome than ever. They talked of the events of the war in Poland, the siege of Dantzic by the French, and the resources of Russia; from whence they went to the southward, and discussed the passage of the Dardanelles.

"An unlucky business, that last," said Rupert: "where the blame lay, I cannot pretend to pronounce. All I know is, that

the naval commander has been distinguished in all former actions, and was always held out to me, as one of the most approved and experienced officers in our service."

"I will tell you where the blame lay," observed Mr. Cothelston; "it lay in our envoy undertaking to negotiate when the squadron was anchored at a distance of eight miles from Constantinople."

"I beg your pardon there, Sir," said the Baronet; "the blame lay in our admiral's consenting to treat at all, instead of fighting in the very first instance."

"How can that be, Sir Poole," said Ullesbey, "when it appears that government had always a hope of peace; and that, although differences had certainly arisen, the English armament was only sent out to enforce the demands given in by our ambassador?"

"What should you know about state secrets?" said the Baronet.

"Nothing. But I can read; and I have seen the admiral's despatches, which seem to me to prove that the negotiations were

unavoidably delayed; that the wind and current from the Bosphorus decidedly prevented him from taking such a position as would have annoyed the city: that the whole coast was covered with a line of batteries which were continually increasing,—and that——"

"Quite the contrary," cried Sir Poole, who, without listening to a word, was indignant at Rupert's having so much to say upon the subject; "just the reverse: he should have possessed himself of the castles on each side the straits——"

"Then," interposed Rupert, "with the crews of seven or eight sail of the line, and about four smaller vessels at the utmost, he must have landed, and attacked the force of the whole Turkish empire."

"My dear Sir," said the Baronet fretfully, "you are begging the question."

"Not a bit of it: I go by the admiral's letter; as, between us, the question can only arise upon that; and I appeal to Mr. Cothelston, whether he doesn't say that two hundred thousand men were then assem-

bled at or near Constantinople, in readiness to march against the Russians."

"My good Sir," returned the Baronet, in a tone showing how excessively he felt himself ill used by this pertinacity, "now you are arguing in a circle."

"Pshaw!" said Ullesbey, just as one of the servants came to announce coffee.

Notwithstanding the dulness, as he expressed himself (though another word would have described his feelings better), of these sort of discussions, wherein he was apt to be contradicted without ceremony, by one whom he resolved to consider as his inferior in every respect; these few days spent by Sir Poole at Peterstow, were among the pleasantest of his life. One sister, as he saw clearly, nor did she attempt to disguise her object as much as even policy required, was disposed to make positive love to him. The other, though even his vanity could not pitch upon any instance of forwardness on her part, appeared daily and hourly more charming in his eyes; and the civilities of the father and mother held out every

desirable encouragement. Ullesbey rather worried him, to be sure; not only by crossing him in conversation, but by not manifesting all the symptoms of jealousy and uneasiness, that might reasonably have been expected, when the Baronet was coquetting with Clara. On the other hand, Sir Poole had attended a great deal to Jaqueline, though with caution; and as she, not having an idea but that she had formerly been sufficiently explicit to him, proved gracious and conciliating at present, he flattered himself into a conviction that the thing would do, and looked out eagerly for an opportunity of removing all possibility of further doubt. His circumstances were awkward nevertheless: he had no wish to offend Clara; and although that result seemed inevitable if he married Jaqueline, for which step he grew every moment more and more inclined; in the mean while he relaxed nothing in endeavouring to make himself also acceptable to the elder sister. These two were engaged at a game of chess one morning, when Sir Poole looking out of

the window while Miss Cothelston sat considering her move, espied Jaqueline walking along in the shrubbery below; which being an opportunity that might not occur again, he made a blunder immediately, an irreparable blunder; threw up the game, deceived as well as complimented Clara in the most effectual manner by raving at his defeat, and left her to enjoy her victory, while he hurried down to court her sister, and, if circumstances were propitious, actually to make her an offer.

Sir Poole set out so much in earnest, that he overtook Miss Jaqueline just as she left the narrow gravel walk for an open space laid out in turf and beds of flowers, and indeed found himself well up with her before he had exactly considered what he was to say.

Jaqueline stopped, hoping he would make his observation and then pass on. "Is your game over already?" said she, perceiving that he simpered, shrugged his shoulders, and twigged at his cravat, without speaking a word; "you were always a

chess-player, Sir Poole; and I will do you the justice to say, pressed every body in this house pretty hard. Do you find my sister improved?"

"Yes. Eh—yes; improved enough to beat me."

"You don't say so," cried Jaqueline, still edging to the side of the path, that he might have room to pass by.

"My mind is in no state for chess," said the Baronet.

"Why not?"

"By all the heavenly powers, I was thinking of something else when we placed the men, which never went out of my head through the whole game afterwards."

"Then, no wonder you lost it," she replied.

"No wonder indeed, Miss Jaqueline; and, to be sincere with you, the same subject has been uppermost in my thoughts ever since I came to Peterstow. I have mused upon it alone, I have mused upon it in company, I have dreamt about it, and

faith! I'm surprised that I haven't talked about it."

"I would do so," returned Jaqueline, "if I were you, and 'twould give me any satisfaction. You are among a set of old friends to whom any topic will be acceptable that is interesting to you, and we are not provided with too many, as you doubtless must have perceived."

"Were not you going towards the gate that leads into the farm-yard?" said Sir Poole. She assented by a slight inclination of the head.

"May I be permitted to accompany you?"

"Surely," she replied; "but I did not intend to stay out much longer."

They went on therefore together, the Baronet twisting himself about in the strangest contortions that a young man ever yet threw his body into under the notion of ease. But he had been rather put out by one of her last remarks, and wished he could take up the subject just where she had interrupted him; that how-

ever not being so practicable, he thought it best to begin again, ab ovo.

" My mind, Miss Jaqueline, was in no state for chess this morning, I— I—I give you my word of honour."

An idea, which she had always laughed at, when suggested by any body else, now struck Jaqueline as probable ; she began to suspect that her sister's encouragement and manifold complaisance had at last proved effective upon the vanity of the Baronet, and she presumed that he was now about to admit her into his confidence. As she knew, therefore, how long Clara's heart (such a one as it was) had been set upon this object, Jaqueline determined to forward the matter, however little she might be able, in her own mind, to associate the notions of felicity and Sir Poole Preston.

" That is not inconceivable," she replied with a smile: " one frequently feels indisposed to so stern a diversion; for my part, I think a game at chess a very arduous concern."

"There are more important concerns, Miss Jaqueline—"

Just then she turned and looked full at him; he did not venture, however, to meet her eye, but strutted on a few steps before her, with a gait which was any thing but graceful, and not quite so careless, either, as he meant it should appear.

"There are more important concerns in life," repeated the bold dragoon.

"A great many," said she.

"I'll be bound now, lots of silly reports about me, have found their way to this place, since I went into the army."

"None, to my knowledge," returned Jaqueline.

"Nothing could be more likely," he continued, "than that reports of my intending to marry, should be put about, just out of fun and contradiction; because I have often talked—I know I have—in a rattling kind of way, ridiculing swain-ishness and constancy, and true love, and all that kind of thing. But the truth is, I think well of the state—I do upon my soul and body! I think

marriage gives the only chance for real happiness; and what's more, I tell you frankly, that if people had said I wished to marry into this family, they wouldn't have been a hundred leagues from the mark."

"And I feel myself justified in telling you as frankly," she replied, "that if such is your object, I am aware of nothing that need discourage you, and heartily wish you success."

Sir Poole stared at this answer, which, after all, was a more explicit one, by a very great deal, than he had counted upon.

"Though I should add," said Jaqueline, "that I know no more of my sister's mind than may be collected from her general manner in your company."

The Baronet's countenance fell: he could not repress an exclamation expressive of disappointment; and after clearing his throat by no less than four hems, with distinct intervals between each,

"There are TWO sisters in this house," said he.

Miss Jaqueline now stared in her turn:

and he repeated that undeniable proposition.

"Very true, Sir Poole," she observed, at length; "but I thought that the feelings of one of those sisters upon this subject, might have been understood already."

"Not in consequence of any proposal on my part, I believe," he replied, in a dry and altered tone.

"No," said Jaqueline, readily enough.

"Oh, pooh! pish! You were alluding to some idle flirtations and rebuffs that may have passed between us when we were children: but in this land of freedom, a man may change his mind, I hope, in the course of five years, or a lady either: and what if I suppose that we have changed ours?"

"Do not deceive yourself, Sir Poole, and incur any mortification which may easily be avoided." The Baronet fretted, audibly fretted; but determining not to be overset, he thrust both hands into the pockets of his immensely large and high leathern troisiemes, and turning upon her with an air of unconcern, bordering on contempt, "Then I am

to be refused before I have made an offer, Miss Jaqueline Cothelston?"

"Far from it," said she; "you are a man of sense and discretion, and——never likely to be refused by me."

They now both faced about, and walked towards the house, Sir Poole humming a hornpipe called after the name of a popular opera-dancer of those times.

"That air is from Telemaque, I think?" said Jaqueline.

"Lord have mercy upon you;—you might as well say it's from 'Venice Preserved!' I forgot though; you haven't been in London for these three or four seasons. What can you find to amuse you from year's end to year's end? I wonder you don't turn authoress."

"Authoress!" cried Jaqueline. "Well, I declare, I have sometimes half a mind,—only what can one write? I tried my hand at poetry once, and did some verses on hay-making; but old Dr. Carruthers advised me to put them into the fire."

Sir Poole kept up the appearance of as

much, or nearly as much nonchalance as he had intended; but he was hurt: and though with a view of piqueing Jaqueline, he now paid close and furious attention to her elder sister, this repulse shortened his stay in the country. He talked indeed of returning in the winter or spring, but military duty prevented him; and in the autumn of the following year, war having then broken out between France and Spain, he was sent with his regiment to Corunna.

CHAPTER VII.

We have now reached the year eighteen hundred and eight, that important era, when the revolt (for so it was termed by their oppressors) of the Spanish people proved a rallying point for the real patriots of all countries; gave a blow to the power of France, from which, notwithstanding her subsequent gigantic efforts, she never eventually recovered; and formed a school for British soldiers, wherein they made such progress, as enabled them to contribute their share—and much more than their share—towards the overthrow of a portentous despotism, which had subjugated or threatened every nation of the earth. The continual influx of news produced by these events in Spain, gave a zest to the life of Squire Cothelston, who, after de-

vouring the newspaper of one day, would ruminate, with vast satisfaction, all through the afternoon, anticipating the newspaper of the next; and would delight in unfolding to such of his family as he could get to listen, the direct, consequential, and remotest effects of so interesting a revolution, upon Austria, Russia, Turkey, Persia, India, China, America, and heaven knows where else.

To complete his bliss, his darling niece, Mary Mac-Eure, whose visit to her great-aunt had been prolonged so far beyond the original intention of all the Cothelstons, that even Clara, by way of some change, now began to grow impatient for her return, did at length come back, about the middle of the spring; as charming as ever, as excellent as ever, and as happy—as an approaching union with the individual whom she deservedly preferred before all mankind, and who doted upon her,—could be supposed to make her.

In order to give a more particular account of this occurrence, it must be men-

tioned, that her uncle's reluctant assent to her further stay at Stoneavon, had been obtained early in the former year; much more, in fact, to the gratification of old Mrs. Eleanor Cothelston than that of Mary herself, who had no great fancy for the card-parties, or perhaps even the balls of Stone-avon, a public place of much resort and unbounded dissipation.

Now, although Miss Mac-Eure possessed far more command over her own feelings than eight out of ten of those respectable persons who have been handed down to us, age after age, as philosophers; she nevertheless, by nature, felt very acutely: it is true, that from her constant sweetness of disposition, nay, even gaiety in company, nobody could well suspect any latent vexation to have been lurking in her mind; but she had suffered, and still did suffer, very considerable and frequent anxiety; partly on account of those stories about the impending marriage of Bentley Carruthers in the East, which had all been lately revived (with the agreeable addition, that he

actually was married), in a letter from her cousin Clara; and yet more, from the caprice and unreasonable conduct of Bentley's mother. Dr. Carruthers having at last departed this life, at the close of the year eighteen hundred and seven; Mary, after much doubt and deliberation, suggested by the delicacy of her own situation with respect to that family, determined upon writing a letter of condolence to the widow, whose friendship and partiality for her had formerly been so marked. This letter—as, we believe, will invariably be the case with all others written under similar circumstances—however kindly expressed, partook, in some degree, of the constraint felt by the writer: but, formal as this and that detached passage might have appeared, we will undertake to say that it breathed all the tenderness of Rousseau, compared with the cold and stiff effusion of Mrs. Carruthers, in a reply which held out no wish for a renewal of their affectionate intercourse, and communicated no information upon that subject which the old lady perfectly

well knew to be uppermost in Mary's heart. Here was disappointment and mortification in abundance! She had made advances (about which she long hesitated, whether she ought to make them at all), only to have them slighted; and things, upon the whole, went so cross, that many a Miss in her situation would have moped and pined, avoiding society altogether, or conducting herself as disagreeably as possible when in it; would have been sullen to her acquaintance in general, and, above all, peevish and ungrateful to the friend who loved her best, particularly if she happened to be abiding in that friend's house. Mary's character, however, was not formed after those great models of spirit and sensibility: far from moping and pouting, she never let her aunt find out that she had even received an unpleasant letter, and continued to exert herself in her usual duties and employments.

One morning, as Mrs. Eleanora Cothelston alighted from her chair, on her return from shopping, she thus addressed Miss Mac-Eure, whom she met coming out of

the house: "There now, you are running away, my dear, when I have hardly seen you for two minutes together this day; and just as I've brought back a fine piece of intelligence for you."

"Think of Mrs. Philip Fowkes, Ma'am," said Mary, laughing; "that visit really must be got over, some time or other: and surely, in consideration for others as well as themselves, people are bound to make use of this fine morning, when, in all probability, the attention may be paid with so little trouble to either party."

"Very-sly, Miss Mary: however, if you meant to despatch Mrs. P. Fowkes, it would be unfair, I must own, to detain you,—more especially as I have nothing to say, after all, but that one of your Peterstow neighbours is come to Stoneavon. I wonder you shouldn't have talked to me more about those Carrutherses, Mary,—the family of the late rector of Haddesley, you know? I saw a good deal of them myself, in former times, and they must be well acquainted with my nephew Cothelston."

"Nobody better," replied Miss MacEure, turning away her face. "Am I to understand, then, that Mrs. Carruthers is in this town?"

"My dear girl, you might as well be at Peterstow, or any where else, for a single word that I can make out, while you stand talking with your back towards one."

"Did you say, Ma'am," cried the other, rallying, "that Mrs. Carruthers was coming to Stoneavon?"

"Not coming, Mary; but come. She lodges in Bostock Buildings, either thirteen or fifteen, I forget which; the same house, however, that the Polkittens had. When you come back, I will tell you all about it."

"Ay, but I am not going out quite yet," said Mary.

"Then, as sure as fate, you will find Mrs. Fowkes at home,—that you may take my word for."

"If so, Ma'am, I must make myself as agreeable as I can," she replied, persevering, and following her aunt up stairs. But she

had very little more to hear than had been announced already.

The fact indeed was, that Mrs. Carruthers, having been left with a plentiful jointure, and being obliged to remove from the parsonage on the Doctor's demise, while she had not, as yet, secured any other residence,—thought a temporary sojourn at Stoneavon, a town which she remembered with complacency as the scene where, in her youth, she had been much amused and admired—might not prove unpleasant: in addition to which motive, she fancied her health to be failing, and to require a change of air, or the waters of that place, or something.

Such were the reasons which she gave to others, and to herself, for her present expedition: but in strict truth, this captious and wayward, though very affectionate woman, was, and long had been excessively chagrined, at the coolness which had arisen between her and Mary Mac-Eure; for, independently of the high opinion which she naturally conceived of the latter, because

she was beloved by her son Bentley, Mrs. Carruthers liked Mary's society far better than that of any body else; although, at the same time, she determined that, if they were to be friends again, the other should make all the advances, and, in point of fact, concessions, for the ill usage which she had given Miss Mac-Eure cause to complain of. Mrs. Carruthers could not endure to be in the wrong; at least she could n't bear to be thought in the wrong by another person, particularly by one for whom she had a great regard: so, because Mary had not (in spite of every petulant and insolent discouragement) corresponded regularly with her ever since she went to reside with her aunt Eleanor; when, on the event of Dr. Carruthers' death, a letter did at last arrive from her,—the widow, then worried with business, and more than ever jealous of former neglect, received it with a prejudiced mind; soon settled that it was a mere matter of form, which never came from the heart; and cooked up another in reply, which—if the truly estimable girl to whom

she wrote, had not made every allowance for her infirmities—Mary might fairly have concluded, did indeed come from the heart, but from a very bad heart.

Childish as it appears, Mrs. Carruthers is suspected not to have been without a hope, that her last cold and unkind letter might provoke Miss Mac-Eure to such a splenetic answer as would have inclined the balance of fault between them to Mary's account; and thus afforded some actual ground of complaint against her, which might have given the former an opportunity, with airs of superiority now on her side, of forgiving her young friend, and taking her once more into full favour and affection. But she was disappointed: Mary neither wrote to her, nor talked about her; and Mrs. Carruthers, having heard from her son about this time, whose communication was VERY important,—grew terribly frightened at the mischief threatened by her own capricious humours: hence, the principal cause of her coming to Stoneavon. Before she had been there ten days, however, the

feelings of this widow turned of sixty, which seemed more to resemble the suspicions and wounded pride of a jealous lover, than what might have been expected from her, led her to the most inconsistent and ridiculous conduct. She now took it into her head to be angry because Mary had not called upon her; and under that influence, absolutely left a shop once, upon the appearance of the former at the door: on another occasion, when Miss Mac-Eure was in a circulating library, looking over some prints, Mrs. Carruthers entered the shop, and made an instantaneous retreat on perceiving her.

At evening parties, to be sure, they were prevented from meeting, by the circumstance of the elder lady being in her weeds, and not mixing in general company: but at church one morning, they sat within three pews of each other; and not only did Mrs. Carruthers steadily decline to favour Mary with the least sign of acknowledgment, but purposely, and indeed ostentatiously, went out of her way to avoid her when the service was over.

Much about this time her aunt Eleanor requested Miss Mac-Eure to take the carriage and pay a visit to a family who lived at about four miles distance from Stoneavon, desiring Mary to leave her name if the people were out, and duly to make her apologies on the score of old age and infirmity, if she found any of them at home. The commission was cheerfully undertaken, and the visit achieved. Whether any body was at home or not, does not signify in the slightest degree to us; every thing necessary to be told is, that Mary went: she crawled up a tremendous ascent at the outset, drove on nearly the whole length of Laverton Down, and descended, by a much worse hill, into the village of that name. All her duties in Laverton being completed, Miss Mac-Eure again mounted the first part of the hill on her return, in the execution of which labour the horses evinced some symptoms of discomfort; but being tolerably used to the country, they conquered those difficulties; and as the chariot ran smoothly along over the flat

down upon the top, she could indulge in unbroken reflections on the very strange behaviour of the widow Carruthers.

"If she means to show mere disregard of me," thought Mary, "she overacts her part: if dislike, or contempt—I am at a loss to guess what additional offence I can possibly have given since I came here to live with my aunt. No—there is some other motive for it which I never can make out. Perhaps, by this time, she knows that Bentley's reported marriage will not happen at all; and her indisposition to a connexion with me and my family may have renewed all her apprehensions on that account! Be it so, then. I had hoped, at least, to have gone on in habits of friendship with her; but she has an unhappy temper, in some respects, with—I must say—the very cruellest manner of doing an unkind thing, that ever belonged to any human being."

The carriage here entered a narrow road between two stone walls, and was about to descend the hill that overhangs

Stoneavon, when the coachman held up, in consequence of the formidable and unruly advance of another pair of horses then approaching them. The latter had cleared the greater part of the hill, and just reached the steepest pitch of all which would have landed them on the down: there however they began to kick, give way, and stagger in a truly alarming manner. The voice and the whip were applied to them in vain; and while the coachman was endeavouring to get down from the box, and a lady, with her head and half her person stretched out of the window, continued screeching to him, and supplicating, with shrieks, on all sides for assistance; her carriage ran slanting back across the road and dashed frightfully against the wall, just where it formed a barrier to a precipice nearly eighty feet high. Some of the upper stones of the wall were dislodged, and rolled, with a heavy noise, to the bottom of the precipice: one of the horses also came down upon the road, and the coachman was

thrown beside him; but not being materially hurt, he immediately recovered his legs, and got round in front of the other horse in time to make sure of them, and prevent them from struggling further in so extremely perilous a situation. Miss Mac-Eure now desired to be let out; and hastening below the brow of the hill, followed by a servant, she soon reached the other carriage, and the lady was extricated from all danger, before her own man, who attended her on horseback, but had stopped to chatter with some one in the suburbs of Stoneavon, could come up to her relief. Mrs. Carruthers, for it was nobody else, whose young horses had subjected her to all this serious inconvenience, could not speak for some time, and seemed to fancy herself still upon the brink of a precipice, even after she had been removed to a place of complete security. She grasped Mary tight with one hand, and the footman who had helped her out of the carriage, with the other, and would hardly suffer herself to be lifted into the chariot which stood wait-

ing for Mary on the top of the hill: Miss Mac-Eure being well aware all the time, that her charge was nearly in hysterics, and required the most discreet and cautious management. The widow recovered her tongue while they were endeavouring to get her up the steps.—"No power on earth," said she, "shall persuade me to trust myself in another carriage to-day:" then, for the first time, observing those who held her, "Oh, Lord protect me—if it isn't dearest Miss Mac-Eure!" She threw herself upon Mary's neck, sobbed and cried with unrestrained violence, desisted from all further opposition, and by the steady steeds and sober coachman of Mrs. Eleanora Cothelston, was carried safely to the level road in the suburbs of the town. On their way, Mary assured her that the horse which had been down was now on his legs again, and her own carriage brought out into the middle of the road: to not one syllable of which information did Mrs. Carruthers advert; but seizing her companion by both hands, and

looking earnestly in her face—"I love you," she said, "better than any living creature in this world, but one, and you know I do. Why, then, could you not come to see me? I will tell you why—it was pride, and nothing but pride; and pride is your foible, Miss Mac-Eure."

"Had I any reason to suppose that you wished me to call upon you?" said Mary, in a kind though extremely grave tone.

"Yes, you had: you are acquainted with my particular failings, and should have allowed for them; but that is what you never will do. I know your way exactly: you perform your own duties:—yes—yes—you do them most exemplarily; but you never yet condescended, never, I declare, in any one instance, to pity and indulge the weaknesses of your friends: and I am the truest of your friends, as well—Heaven help me—as the very weakest of them all." Here another flood of tears; in spite of which, however, she contrived to finish, in one fashion or another, what she had to say. "You have this day done

me the greatest service; and you would always be ready, no doubt you would, to do that sort of thing; ay, at the risk of your own life, if it should be necessary; I do not want to be convinced of that: but when it comes to be whether you shall bear with faults which I am not able to conquer, and humour an unhappy temper, which, after all, makes me far more wretched than any body about me—then you are just like so much marble."

"My dear Madam, there is no affection lost between us, you may rest assured there is not," returned Mary; "but I also expect to be believed, when I protest to you that I do NOT understand your feelings so entirely as you seem to imagine; and after your letter to me in the winter, in addition to what had passed between us before, I did think, and had reason to think, that your heart was for ever estranged from me."

"And were you so very, very sorry for the loss of it, Miss Mac-Eure?"

"You have no right, Ma'am, to sup-

pose me habitually insincere; and I must say, that your using me so is the more cruel, when you might remember the circumstances in which I once stood with regard to your family,—circumstances which must and ought to make me peculiarly careful not to force myself upon your intimacy, and proportionably sensible of the least coldness, or unkindness, or alteration in your behaviour to me."

Mrs. Carruthers hung down her head, and said no more till they were close to the bridge at the entrance of Stoneavon; then looking up, with eyes red and inflamed, and scarcely able to speak for her tears, "I have acted," she replied, "not only like a fool, but an unjust and barbarous fool! All you say is right: what you have been saying is quite strictly true."

"Dear Mrs. Carruthers," cried Mary, "distress yourself no more about these misunderstandings."

"Pray, Miss Mac-Eure," continued the other, "did you ever hear of any communication made by your mother to me, not

long before her death—in terms particularly, and, I am confident, designedly offensive?"

"Never, I declare solemnly: unless indeed she alluded to it upon her deathbed. At that time she certainly told me that she had done me an injury with the Carruthers' family; but did not live to explain her words."

"Neither will I explain them, my dearest excellent girl, nor ever again brood over them myself. Are we friends once more, Miss Mac-Eure?"

"The best of friends, if you will permit me to have the pleasure of saying so."

"Then I think, Mary, you might ask after one of your old acquaintance."

Miss Mac-Eure turned pale; but soon replied, "I sincerely hope, Ma'am, HE is well and happy."

"You had a good opinion of him when he went to the East Indies?"

"A very good one."

"And a regard for him too, Mary?"

"Indeed I had."

Here the dialogue was interrupted by

their stopping at Mrs. Carruthers' door; but the latter was as unwilling to part with Mary now, as a little while ago she seemed to be to meet her; and nothing would serve, but she must go and wait upon Mrs. E. Cothelston that very same evening, apologizing for her former delay, and highly pleasing the old lady by the information, that her general rule of visiting nobody at present, never was nor could be applicable to a long-esteemed friend like Mrs. Eleanora Cothelston, whose valuable and rational society would be just the solace which, in her forlorn state, she most wanted to keep up her spirits. They accordingly saw one another perpetually, and alternately drank tea at each other's houses almost every night; but when the widow invited them to dinner, there was a demur. Mrs. Eleanora, a sufficiently prim and stiff personage in her notion of reciprocal civilities, gave no dinners herself, and therefore made an obstinate resistance to the proposal: twice indeed she suffered her niece to dine there; but did not much

relish that arrangement, by which she lost Mary's company for half the day: so at length, upon her old friend's sending to them at the beginning of a week, and begging, as a special favour, that both the ladies would take a quiet dinner with her on the Thursday following, Mrs. Cothelston abated of her strictness, and agreed to go.

CHAPTER VIII.

They duly kept their appointment, and went to Bostock Buildings in chairs, the usual mode of conveyance about that city. When they arrived, old Mrs. Eleanor was diffuse upon an extraordinary, and indeed, by her account, little less than miraculous escape which she had been blessed with by the way: one of her chairmen having stepped on a piece of orange-peel and fallen flat down without the possibility of recovering himself, in the very steepest part of Blenheim Row. Upon this adventure the old lady harangued with considerable animation and prolixity, totally uninterrupted by Mrs. Carruthers, who, as Mary saw plainly enough, though her aunt could not, stood in an attentive attitude, but with her own head full of her own concerns. In-

deed, that the widow meditated some plan of diversion or surprise for her guests, appeared by her deportment throughout this whole afternoon. She began talking upon twenty different subjects, perhaps; and ran from every one of them without the least regard for the consistency of her own discourse, and as little for the contradiction which she received from old Mrs. Cothelston upon several points, or for the occasional comments of Miss Mac-Eure.

In the midst of this very odd behaviour, she seemed at times unable to control her joy; and grew so excessively fond of Mary Mac-Eure, that the latter, aware of the good lady's sudden turns and whims, felt really uneasy, for fear these transports should exhaust her spirits, and prove the forerunners of another quarrel. Thrice, in overflowing affection, she embraced Mary, without any apparent call for such a proceeding, and twice, locking her arm within her own, she led her through the folding doors into another room, but without having made up her mind to say any thing when

they got there. The dinner, however, was soon ready, and brought Mrs. Carruthers in some measure to herself: duties are enjoined by that meal, to which the most eccentric must bend, when they happen to have company in their houses; and the worthy widow now calling to mind the uncommon condescension of Mrs. Eleanora in dining from home, addressed exclusively to the latter, some observations upon her own recent fright near Laverton Down, when Mary Mac-Eure had so fortunately been at hand to assist her. This topic ensured from her venerable friend (as we must do Mrs. Carruthers the justice to say, she always meant it should) the entire recapitulation of the chairman's fall that day, on their way to Bostock Buildings, followed by various other narratives of her former escapes and perils; in three of which, it appeared that she had been run away with (but only by horses, we understand); and in a fourth instance, she had been robbed between Illsbury and Cowbridge, by a single footpad—the same man that was afterwards hanged,

and Mrs. Eleanora called it a curious coincidence, for robbing the late Mr. Valentine Izzard, a second cousin of the very apothecary who now attended her at Stoneavon. These stories, with a little aid, and but little, to say the truth, from the others, lasted pretty well till they went up to tea; when, as Mary had apprehended, Mrs. Carruthers began to show symptoms of being worn out. She ran perpetually to the windows, and either became fidgetty and fretful with her servants, or reclined upon the sopha, in a state of dejection, scarcely speaking to any body. Before the tea-things were taken away, however, they heard three raps at the house-door; and with a deep sigh, or deeply drawing her breath from the effect of strong emotion, Mrs. Carruthers sat upright for a moment, clasped her hands together, while her lips moved as if in uttering some internal ejaculation, and again sinking down upon the sopha, she hid her face on the cushion.

The door of the room was now opened; and a servant, without putting his head in,

said in a low tone, that some one wished to speak with his mistress in the parlour. She obeyed the summons directly.

Mary Mac-Eure had been used to a great many of her freaks, but still thought there was something extraordinary in the vagaries of this evening; and waited, not without interest and curiosity, to see what would be the conclusion of the drama. She waited on for a good half hour and upwards, a period which appeared quite as long as it really was; being in no sort beguiled by the prosing of her aunt Eleanor upon the merits and demerits of their hostess, whom she represented as possessed of an excellent heart, and principles in conformity, but with no more command over herself, owing to having been a spoiled child and a beauty, than if she had always remained a child of twelve years old. From thence Mrs. E. Cothelston took occasion to enlarge upon the benefits of early crosses, in forming the character and strengthening the mind; after which, in due course, she proceeded to dilate upon the severe discipline which she

herself had undergone in her youth; and was only prevented from proving herself to be the very pattern of a respectable old woman at present, by the return of Mrs. Carruthers; who came to them, not merely free from the nervous, restless symptoms, which had disturbed her before, but with an air of universal cheerfulness and delight.

"It was only that detestable man about the carpet, after all," said she to Mary; "and I don't somehow feel as if I had chosen well now. I shall not be satisfied, my love, unless you will have the goodness (I told him you would) to step down into the parlour and sanction what I fixed upon."

"Now I like you, Ma'am, for appealing to my taste," replied Miss Mac-Eure, running down stairs, and determining to agree with her, let her have pitched upon what she might.

It was a fine evening in the beginning of summer; they had dined early; and though now about nine o'clock, no candles had been brought into the parlour: which Mary thought odd, as there was scarcely light left

for her to view the new carpet by. When she entered the room, she perceived a man standing near the fireplace: she could not see the features of his countenance distinctly, but it struck her that he had not much the air of an upholsterer. He made her a profound bow; at which the young lady had no reason to be surprised; nor was she; and returning the courtesy by a slight bend of the head, she advanced towards him. As she approached he also stepped forwards, and (though with some appearance of doubt or timidity) held out his hand. At this, she certainly did feel very much astonished, and looking full in his face,—"Merciful heaven!" she cried, "is it you!"

"I hope I see Miss Mac-Eure in perfect health."

"Indeed, Mr. Carruthers, I am glad—truly glad, believe me: but—stop a minute—'t is so very sudden. Why did you take me by surprise in this manner?"

"Upon my word, I can only say that if this had been my own project, it would have looked like a piece of great imperti-

nence—but you know my mother's way; I could not contradict her within the first half hour of our meeting, and she would have it so."

"Oh! then it's all very well," returned Mary, attempting to laugh.

"A silly trick though," said he, "and I fear you were startled."

"A little perhaps, just at first," she replied; being still, in truth, very considerably agitated.

"Sit you down then; sit down, dear Miss Mac-Eure." He took her hand and led her to a chair. "Pardon all this folly, and compose yourself."

"Have you been long in England?" said Mary.

"Five days including the present, during two of which, business peremptorily detained me in London; and from thence, hearing that she was at Stoneavon, I wrote to my mother. May I say I am excessively happy to see you once more? May I, Miss Mac-Eure? I thought of this meeting during every moment of the voyage; ay, and

for many, many months before. May I presume to hope that you are not displeased at my return?"

"Very much the contrary."

"When I went away," said he, "I am certain we were—I—I—think—we were friends."

"Surely," replied Mary.

"I hope you remain unaltered, Miss Mac-Eure."

"In every respect I believe, except that I am some five years older. And now, Mr. Carruthers, though I know I do not give you your appropriate military title, permit me to congratulate you upon the renown which you have obtained in your profession. Your friends, I suspect, heard of you very seldom, and very irregularly; but the public papers told us of THAT nevertheless."

"Success in life can never be indifferent to me, as long as Miss Mac-Eure takes an interest in my welfare."

"Indeed!" said Mary archly; for by this time she had no doubt remaining of all being perfectly safe.

"'Tis for your dear sake alone," he cried; "I must and will say it——'t is for your sake alone, my ever beloved and only—— "

"Oh, hush! Mr. Carruthers: you are now running on a great deal too fast; for if what I am told be true, the desire of pleasing me by your good conduct, however flattering to me personally, must be only a secondary, indeed ought to be a very distant consideration with you."

"And why so, pray?" returned Bentley, rather alarmed for an instant, though as soon reassured by her manner of speaking.

"Merely because you are going to be married, if not married already, to another woman! Nay, if you pretend to stare, I must even tell you who the lady is;" which she forthwith proceeded to do; and on hearing the name, Bentley burst into a shout of laughter.

"There are certain trials, dearest Mary," said he, repossessing himself of her hand, "which must necessarily await any young

officer, or any young politician, or any young man, let his line of life be what it may, who tacitly reflects upon the conduct of other people, by showing, not so much through his verbal professions as through his conduct, that he is a sincere believer in Christianity, and that he actually does rest his hopes upon it. Trials of this sort, too, are the more frequent (which, to say the truth, is but just) when the obnoxious individual has, at one time, lived as freely, or more so than any of those around him. This hint, without further detail, will directly explain to you the nature of a regimental joke, which, with equal impudence and positiveness, but with infinitely greater success than I had conceived to be possible, has been circulated of my intended nuptials. As to the lady, as she is still single, we will still call her young, if you please; but I only wish you had seen her,—which is all that I can boast of myself, for I had no personal acquaintance with the damsel."

He then went on to draw a picture of his reported bride: at which, Mary, who

appeared extravagantly diverted (though Carruthers saw, without much mortification, that her glee rather arose from the exuberance of her own felicity than the power of his wit), had not ceased to laugh as if she never had been amused before, when Mrs. Carruthers came down into the parlour, equally happy with both of them, and begged to be informed whether their intention was to sit by themselves all night long in the dark. The widow, indeed, would probably have made her appearance before, but her time had not been unpleasantly occupied in apprising Mrs. Eleanora Cothelston of all that she judged necessary in this affair: the attachment—the devotion, she called it—of her son to Miss Mac-Eure; the exalted opinion which she herself entertained, and ever had entertained, of the latter; and the flourishing circumstances in which Bentley was left by her own poor dear Dr. Carruthers; adding, that he could not have one penny less than three thousand a year, at present, besides a convenient sum of money in hand, and the expectation

of a considerable accession from herself hereafter.

She might also have mentioned, though enough was said, and more than enough, to propitiate Mrs. Eleanora, that Bentley had not only been greatly distinguished as a steady, capable, and gallant soldier; but that the predictions of many of their friends about his quick rise in the army, were completely verified. For, with the means of purchasing on always ready; young Carruthers having changed into two other regiments for the sake of a step in each, had, just before they left the East Indies, attained the rank of a field officer in his old original regiment, now commanded by his particular friend Colonel Badbury, who had invariably been kind to him when he first joined, and stood most in need of kindness and support.

The evening was concluded in measureless content; and Mrs. E. Cothelston explained to her niece, when they returned home at night, the immense difference in point of modesty and agreeableness, between

officers who had, and who had not, seen service: illustrating her remark by sufficiently severe reflections upon a certain Captain Puckoon, who visited at her father's when she was a girl, and was accustomed, she knew, to talk elsewhere in the most presumptuous, unfounded, and coxcombical strain. But on this slight acquaintance even, the old lady did not scruple to approve of her niece's choice, feeling confident (she said) that the remarkably handsome person of Major Carruthers had been totally overlooked by Mary, in comparison of his high and acknowledged merit.

Next day came the offer in form, and favourable reply: afterwards, in rapid succession, perpetual and exquisitely delightful meetings between the lovers, letters sent off to Peterstow, and rapturous congratulations in return—accompanied, however, by a peremptory requisition that the wedding should take place there: in which demand, as Mr. Cothelston had certainly been little less than a father to Mary, both she and Bentley, with the concurrence of their other rela-

tions at Stoneavon, thought it right to acquiesce.

Nor were the most courtly and pressing invitations, or rather petitions, to Mrs. Carruthers and old Madam Eleanora omitted, that they would honour Peterstow once more, and grace the nuptials with their presence: consequently, before the summer was over, they had all performed the journey without even the shadow of an adventure, and assembled at Squire Cothelston's. Of course, as far as could be consistent with civility by the old ladies, Bentley gave Miss Mac-Eure a good share of his conversation upon the road; and, among other things, talked much of a young man in his regiment, to whose friendly aid in two different instances, he considered himself indebted—perhaps for his life—at all events, for a preservation from some serious mischief; and added (in which he always received encouragement from his fair auditor), that though he was willing to believe he had since been instrumental in forwarding the same person's promotion to be a non-

commissioned officer—he yet reckoned himself so far bound in gratitude to the other, that he was resolved to do something towards the effectual maintenance of his family, the man having married only a short time before they sailed for England.

Little need be said of their reception at Peterstow. The Squire was abundant in gracious courtesy to Major Carruthers, and more impassioned in his affection to his niece, than he had ever yet shown himself towards any human being. Lady Annabella observed, that Major Carruthers being a person of undoubted talent, she looked forward to the connexion with rather pleasing ideas; though she had taken it into her head, somehow (but it seemed all like a dream), that he formerly paid most attention to her daughter Jaqueline.

Clara professed herself charmed with every thing; and in the mean time endeavoured to make Ullesbey join her in sneering and laughing at the story of Bentley's Eastern attachment; but without much success: while Jaqueline, who, from the

first moment she heard that Carruthers was in England, had been forming many a grave determination how she should meet him, and how she should behave to him as an individual about to be nearly related to their family,—found, when they did meet, that time had really obliterated every painful feeling, and deadened every unpleasant recollection; that his character was wholly and unquestionably changed; and that, without any effort, they might go on as good friends as she would wish to be with the husband of a cousin whom she respected and loved.

Rupert Ullesbey, by the way, having been written to, shortly after Carruthers came to Stoneavon, had secured for his friend a house ready furnished for a year and more, within four miles of Dr. Carruthers' late residence, the parsonage at Haddesley. And on the day before the wedding, when Rupert rode over to see that all was comfortable, he passed a man just coming out of the house with an erect gait and military air, who touched his hat slightly,

in an independent manner, but at the same time, with a kind of smile implying recognition and good will. Ullesbey was immediately struck by his countenance, he perfectly remembered that he had seen him before, and worried himself all the day till he got back to dinner, with racking his brains, to think where he had formerly met him, and who he could be. Neither Mr. Cothelston nor the young ladies (Lady Annabella of course was out of the question) knew any thing about such a person; and in suspense he remained till Bentley Carruthers made his appearance: then indeed he obtained the information, that the stranger was no other than his old acquaintance Martin Holtofte; the same soldier—and a very good one he was—whom Bentley had mentioned so frequently to Miss Mac-Eure, and whom he had managed to bring down into the country on this occasion, with a view of permanently befriending him, at the period of his own greatest happiness.

And now took place the marriage between Bentley Carruthers and Mary Mac-

Eure: of which, if we were to say that it produced uninterrupted felicity—nobody would believe us: but, on the other hand, if we were to assert that it did not, and does not to this hour, prove a blessing to both of them; and mainly serve (under Providence) to reconcile them both to the unavoidable evils of this world—we should talk very rashly and improperly. Bentley, however,—to return to the first days of their union,—though at ease, and certainly affluent in his circumstances, was still a British officer, at a most momentous juncture: and, after a winter passed in the society of his beloved wife, he left her to rejoin his regiment in Ireland; from a southern port of which quarter of the empire, he sailed for Portugal early in the ensuing spring.

CHAPTER IX.

Although a series of adventures is in general supposed to be sufficiently wound up by a happy wedding, and never (allowing for the imperfection attending every thing human) was there a happier than the one which we lately had to announce; the fortunes of some other individuals were connected with the hero, or at least the heroine, of these transactions, whose fate may not be wholly uninteresting: and we have no better means of following their history, than by giving certain extracts from the letters of Major Carruthers to his lady; omitting however, for brevity sake, many of those terms of affectionate regard and endearment, which were frequent throughout the correspondence. The first which we shall notice, dated from the

Tagus, in the beginning of April eighteen hundred and nine, after touching on several family matters, proceeded thus:

"You will be surprised, considering the date, at the early receipt of this letter: but on the very morning after I had sent off my last, the wind came round; and we sailed, with a fresh breeze, very strong at first, but afterwards more moderate, till we came into this river yesterday. Never had I less reason to be dissatisfied with a sea voyage: for our run was so short, that we scarce had time to eat the fresh bread put on board at Balnacourly, before the supply was renewed here. Our passage up the Tagus delighted me! A noble expanse of water; and the genial warmth of the climate, and advanced state of vegetation, were pleasantly enough contrasted with the country which we had just quitted. You are not, as yet, to expect military information from me. What the English force may consist of, I am ignorant: where the French are, I am equally ignorant: most probably at Oporto. If

one may hazard a guess, however, I should say, our strength might be about sufficient to keep the enemy in check, till their redoubtable Emperor has finished with the Austrians; and then perhaps we shall re-embark, under much the same circumstances as at Corunna: so that, before the year's end, I may see my very dear Mary again."

The corner of the next letter being torn off, the date of the month was gone, and only the word "Rio Ma——" visible; but by the context, it appears to have been written after the middle of the same April.

"If the French could be expelled from Portugal by hatred alone, the Portuguese would get them out, without a single ally. Every man is arming in one fashion or another: muskets, pikes, and even fowling-pieces, are in universal requisition. But the best groups consist of their engineers, who fortify every point with the most exemplary perseverance: though such fortifications, I doubt, were never before seen in any age or country. Our young men laugh at them with very little mercy; notwithstanding

which, the Portuguese whom I have seen under arms, and commanded by British officers, are already far more respectable, in all circumstances, than any one could have supposed. Mary, my love, you should have seen the house where I was first quartered, on the southern bank of the Tagus, in a villa (it probably might be called) adjoining the town of Almada: I had a garden that put me in mind of Moors, Kalifs, Faquers, Viziers, Haroun, Mesrour, and all the scenery of the Arabian Nights. Long alleys with treillages of vines, beds of the richest and gaudiest flowers, fountains, basins of marble stocked with gold and silver fish; and, to complete the enchantment, such a view of Lisbon across the water, with the whole fleet between me and the city, as it would have been worth your while to come from England expressly to see, though you were to have set out on your return the very next day.

"Our regiment embarked on the Tagus, in fourteen boats of different sizes. Just

above Lisbon, the river is immense; the right bank, wooded luxuriantly, and interspersed with villages; the left, flat, and covered with firs. We landed at Saccarem" (so, at least, says the manuscript; but Santarem, we presume, is intended); "and having passed through Villa Franca de Xeiro, we marched on, in a most delectable country, with orange groves blooming around us, all the way to Castanheira, near which town the hills begin to assume an imposing appearance.

"My dear, I cannot impartially conclude this letter, without acknowledging that, whatever may have been the behaviour of the French (and even on first entering the country they behaved badly enough), I was concerned to hear almost equal complaints against two British officers, for such they represented themselves to be, who took up their abode at a religious house belonging to a convent in this place (Castanheira) about a fortnight since.

"The house I speak of, is inhabited by a couple of friars only: young men, vastly

civil; and not being peculiarly observant of the austerities of their order, I was the more shocked at the account, which talking rather as men of the world than religionists, they gave us, of the gross misconduct of those two Englishmen: whose profaneness, irregularity, and licentiousness, were—— what there can be no necessity for me to enlarge upon."

The same subject happened to be resumed in another letter from Coimbra, written on May the fifth, from which, therefore, we shall add some particulars.

"After a march of eleven hours, the former part of which was good, but the latter execrable, we came to Leiria, a small town among the mountains. The situation of this place is romance itself; but I deal the less in description just here, having something further to observe about the soi-disant English officers: for, that they have no right to assume that title, I am happy to say, seems every day more and more probable. I was quartered at an Augustine convent—excellent cheer, luxurious

bed, and hearty welcome. Here we overtook some of the —— regiment; and from them I learnt, that the fellows who gave such offence at Castanheira, and have conducted themselves just as ill here, are not English, but Germans; Bavarians, I think they call themselves. Whatever country they may belong to, besides being the most abandoned of profligates, they are likewise described as the most impudent of impostors: and one of them, if not both, lays claim to the power of animal magnetism, with other abominable nonsense, of which we heard a great deal more about ten or twelve years ago, than we have done of late. It appears, moreover, that a certain Mr. Popplekin, a lieutenant in the regiment just mentioned, proved silly enough to go out into the country with these people by night, in order to be shown some of their mystical operations. Now what happened I never could make out precisely: but if a British officer could ever form a guess what sort of a sensation fear might be, the gallant lieutenant, I suspect, was

let into the secret that night. They raised a spirit, or something, I understand: such a one, I can promise you, they raised, among our common men, that a precipitate retreat from Leiria alone saved the Rosicrucians from some very unhappy discipline, most likely a ducking. I was not without curiosity about this affair; but on meeting with Mr. Popplekin (the initiated), the day before yesterday, I found him such a goose, that nothing credible, or intelligible even, could be got out of him."

The letter then mentions, that the chief command in Portugal had passed from the hands of a very distinguished general officer, into those of his junior in rank; but whose experience and renown could be exceeded by none in his Majesty's service; and states, that the expectation of something decisive increased daily throughout the army.

"Coimbra," Major Carruthers thus resumes, "is the Oxford of Portugal. Here we were well received, and made rout with in abundance. We entered the place over

a long low bridge, under temporary triumphal arches. The natives issued forth in multitudes, to meet us; not a mere mob, Mary, but a respectable population, and many pretty well-dressed women among them, you may take my word for it; welcoming us with 'vivats' interminable, and sprinkling us with roses, orange-flowers, and (I am not in joke) sugar-plumbs. Up to this moment, the campaign has been just a party of pleasure; but things now begin to look serious; and privations, and inconveniencies, must follow in their course."

He does not appear to have written again, at least we have none of his letters in our possession, till the sixth of the following July, and on that day but briefly. Some mention is made of the distribution of the army at Coimbra; one division of which, the one to which he was attached, consisting of five regiments, occupied an entire college. Near the conclusion of the letter, he expresses himself thus, though no formal change of date appears upon the

paper: "The above was written three days ago, under a tree near Castello Branco: since which, we have entered Spain! without prodigies, without opposition, and I might almost add, without notice. A rivulet divides the kingdoms, on this border, never very broad at any time; deep they say, at some seasons; but now scarcely over our ankles: nor are there any tokens, by barriers, custom-houses, or establishments of that description, that you have passed the frontier." In a subsequent letter, however, dated from Placentia on the eleventh of the same month, such an intimation was given of approaching active hostilities, as required all Mary's fortitude to enable her to contemplate without distress and dismay.

"I write," he continues, "in a wood, at a few miles distance from the town, in and around which, our whole army, as I understand, is to assemble by the nineteenth: and when all together, we shall be little short of twenty thousand. Of the Spaniards, militarily speaking, I have hi-

therto seen nothing. Cuesta is reported to be upon our right, about nine leagues off, with from thirty-eight to forty thousand men: a respectable force in point of numbers, and one really hears a fair account of them: but my dearest Mary, I surmise, is principally anxious all this while, to know where the French may be; and I heartily wish I could satisfy her with more accurate information. However, if we are to become better acquainted with them, Victor is our man; and he was last heard of at Talavera del Reyna: he has a Marshal's corps, and various other divisions besides. Where Joseph has got to, nobody (except perhaps those Bavarian conjurors as they call themselves, whom I touched upon in one of my last) can form any notion: pushed on to Seville some say, while he and Victor are in mutual ignorance of each other's movements: and how should it be otherwise, in a country where towns are upwards of ten miles apart, often double that distance, with no single houses to be seen, and seldom a SINGLE individual!

Blake's army at Valencia is reported to have dispersed without firing a shot: if so, Marshal Victor will soon feel the advantage in powerful reinforcements. What say you, Mary? for you know as much about the matter as I do; ought we to advance and attack the French Marshal, who seems to lie in perfect security, at eight days' march from the Portuguese frontier? A wiser head than mine, thank heaven, will have to decide that business. Now, my dear, you shall hear how your husband is personally situated. He makes one of an irregular, but most picturesque encampment, in a forest of cork-trees; and his own tent stands on the very spot which Cervantes must have been thinking of, when he brought forward the divine Marcella to address the goatherds from the point of a rock, during Chrysostom's funeral: at the extremity of a valley, closed in with mountains at this time tipped with snow, while a 'Rio Verde' deep enough to swim in, flows within fifty paces of our front line."

From the camp near Talavera, on July the twenty-first, our hero thus his tale renews:

"All means of communication with England grow more and more difficult, from the advance of the army, and its late increase in numbers; on which account, chiefly, no notice is now given of a bag being made up, lest letters should so pour in, as to require more mules than could be spared. Our first day's march from Placentia, though not long, scarcely exceeding nine miles, was fatiguing, and conducted us on the evening of the seventeenth, to Malpartida, where we halted on the driest and nakedest of plains; exposed without a breath of air, to an unmerciful sun, which soon pervaded our tents, and made them hotter than the plain itself. Across the waste, as if to mock us by suggesting the idea of water, soaked a half stagnant stream, incapable of imparting any feeling in the nature of refreshment; and its doubtful feeble flow was like the motion of the last snake seen above ground, to-

wards the end of autumn. Though we found one poor hovel which had been a mill, and afforded partial shelter; our condition was the more vexatious, because a very short distance to the eastward would again have led us to a thick forest, through which runs the clear and rapid Teitar.

"On the eighteenth, my dearest, we were all at fault: the army was directed to halt at Malhados, in consequence of the noble supply of water, which we universally expected there; but the river proved to be dry, and only two wells were found, to supply seventeen thousand men—not a soul less—exclusive of beasts. The head of the column had just arrived in sight of—what ought to have been the water, when the whole was ordered to retrograde; though we, it must be admitted, had the best of the arrangement, being at last stationed deliciously, on the banks of the Teitar, amid the finest forest-trees, encircled nearly to the top by the wild vine, which fell in beautiful festoons between the branches. Tedious work, Mary, on the

nineteenth. Think of our regiment in rear of a column of twenty-four battalions, going as slow as possible during the cool part, and just altogether as fast through all the heat of the day. Twelve hours of exertion brought us to a stream in the neighbourhood of a solitary inn, called, as far as I could make out the name, Vinta di Santinella; where we were rewarded for the patience which (I am willing to hope) we had hitherto manifested, by a mighty pleasant evening. We bought a pig on the march, and either Searle or Mac Laughlin knocked down a hare, just as we came upon our encamping ground.

"At this place, my dear, I made a discovery which will infinitely surprise you, and without doubt interest you, though the interest, I fear, will be of a painful character, as I must name a person whose existence you would be well pleased to forget. You remember two adventurers, calling themselves first English, and afterwards Bavarian officers, whom I spoke of as having made fools of some of our young men, and

considerably disgraced themselves by their conduct in Portugal. These people, I find, have accompanied, or, more accurately speaking, preceded our march ever since we entered Spain; contriving to secure divers advantages and accommodations, under the pretence of being attached to the English army, and getting money, I 'm afraid, out of various officers whenever we halted for any time, either by the audacious impositions that you have already heard of, or by gambling, in every species of which they appear to be proficients. Four or five times a-day these two fellows have been mentioned to me, between the day of our leaving Coimbra and the present, without my feeling sure that they were the same individuals. All doubt, however, was at last removed, by Sir Gilbert Crook of the artillery, a man not particularly prone to be imposed upon, who saw a good deal of them at Aldeguela; and by his report of their habits and proceedings, I full well recognised the gentlemen; nor had I one jot the less certainty upon that head, because they owned themselves

to be Swiss, as long as Sir Gilbert had any intercourse with them. It now turns out, that by less than half an hour I have missed the opportunity of seeing these worthies myself; and indeed, if the recollection of Serjeant Holtofte may be trusted, with one of the two I should NOT have had to commence a new acquaintance. But to be serious upon what assuredly is a serious subject for the unhappy man concerned: towards the close of our day's march on the nineteenth, Holtofte was sent forward by Colonel Badbury, who had heard there was only one house on the spot, to take measures for the accommodation of the men; and when the serjeant got to Vinta di Santinella, he found our Anglo-Bavarian-Swiss enjoying themselves as if uncontrolled masters of the inn. They did not, however, keep possession long; for one of them, at first sight of Holtofte, slunk out of the place in evident confusion and consternation; and having sent for his partner, they had both finally disappeared before the rest of us came up. Serjeant Holtofte (and he, as

you will be aware, might have the best reasons for being positive) affirms, that he would swear before any tribunal in the universe, to the person who avoided him—and who do you think it was? No other than that wretch Alderstoke! His companion seems to have been unknown to the serjeant, nor can I form any conjecture about him, though I prophesy we shall eventually find him out likewise: as Sir G. Crook has a strong impression of having met with him before, and he thinks, in London, though he could not remember the precise time or circumstances. What is to be the end of that man Alderstoke? 'Tis an awful consideration, really; but one which I must confess troubled me little enough on the night of the nineteenth, when we made ourselves as comfortable as we could after our very disagreeable march.

"The situation of this lone inn, where many more took up their quarters than the place would in England be reckoned capable of holding, is as pleasing as almost any spot that I have described to you yet; it

stands on a small islet covered with the most abundant foliage, and of so wild a character, that one might conceive one's self suddenly transported to a desert island in the heart of the Pacific.

"My dearest life, the plot is thickening. In the afternoon of the twentieth, the entire army debouched on one of the plains of Castile, in four columns; the grandest spectacle, as they drew out of the wood, that in my limited military experience I have ever witnessed. The army being thus formed, a march of six or seven miles over the plain, brought our part of it to Oropeso, a town on a hill, at the foot of which stands the convent where I was quartered, and which the French had quitted only that morning. Sad mischief! all the wood-work of the doors, window-frames, and even some rafters from the roof, pulled down to make fires. Mischief too, in mere wantonness; the library sacked, books and manuscripts, the collection of ages, either half burnt or torn to pieces and scattered about the fields."

Major Carruthers concludes his letter as a brave and good man, at the eve of a dreadful battle, might be expected to conclude, to a wife whom he dearly loved, and who so richly deserved all his affection.

CHAPTER X.

MANY letters from Spain, resembling the last in their general description of the state of events, were received in England about the tenth or twelfth of August 1809, and many individuals as well as Mary Carruthers looked day after day for further intelligence of the utmost importance: all awaited the impending news with a deep interest, some with the most painful apprehensions.

On Monday, the fourteenth, Mrs. Bentley Carruthers alighted from her carriage at Peterstow house, with her husband's letter in her hand, which she had not yet shown to any of the Cothelston family; and in the hall she was accosted by a gentleman who, though not absolutely one of that family, favoured them with nearly as much of his company as if he had been.

" All well in Spain, I hope?"

" Perfectly well, Mr. Ullesbey, thank you, up to the twenty-first of last month. This," holding out the letter, " shall be quite at your service, after my uncle has seen it."

" You will not find Mr. Cothelston in the library," said he; " he has gone down to his farm, I believe; but if you will allow me a few minutes' conversation with you before he returns, you will oblige me extremely."

" With me?" she replied; " oh, by all means."

To the study they therefore repaired, where Rupert handed the lady a chair.

" Bless us! then this is to be some matter of grave consultation."

" Don't begin to laugh at me already, Mrs. Carruthers; I shall not detain you one instant beyond what is necessary."

" Nay, as long as ever you please," said Mary.

He then seated himself upon the sopha, lolling in one corner and throwing his arm

over the back, till he had got into as free and careless an attitude as he thought becoming.

"If a married life," he began, "be the happiest; which I firmly believe is the case in general—is the case now, for a man engaged in a profession—there are surely many reasons why it should be equally desirable for one who has his time pretty much at his own command. In the first place, a man in the latter predicament may enjoy more of his wife's society, he may be more at home, of an evening especially, and indeed would be inexcusable if he were not; to be sure, he should have——"

"Enough to marry upon," observed Mary.

"And have I not?" cried he; "even in these times, am not I in circumstances to —to—take such a step, without imprudence?"

"Your humble servant, Mr. Ullesbey," she replied; "I now do comprehend what we are to talk about."

He coloured, but laughed and went on.

"The having sufficient to marry, however, without danger of distress, is one thing; and the being considered an eligible match for a very charming young woman, another. Now there is a cousin of yours, Mrs. Bentley Carruthers——"

"There certainly is," said Mary, breaking in upon this delicate communication, "and I know her so thoroughly, that in requital of the confidence with which you seem disposed to honour me, I shall act the part which I conceive to be most friendly by you, although I fear I may distress you. Trust me, Mr. Ullesbey, it will not do; for, if she thinks favourably of any particular individual at present, she has other views, I am confident. Nobody would be more sorry than myself to lose your society in this neighbourhood; but if your happiness is likely to depend upon marrying my cousin Clara, my sincere opinion is, that you would be discreet in living somewhere less exposed to her attractions."

"My dear Mrs. Bentley," said Rupert, "should I remove from Peterstow, it will

not be for fear of having my heart broken by Miss Clara Cothelston; whom, if I may say so without offence, I understand at least as well as you do. You are mistaken there; but be frank and open still, and pray tell me the worst at once, if your judgment should be against me. I meant your youngest cousin."

"Jaqueline!" cried Mary in amazement: then, after some moments' silence—"that is a very different affair. Do you really love her—as much—as she is worthy of being beloved? Oh, stay, Sir, stay. No vows and protestations, I beseech you; your eagerness is sufficient.—No, no; I was rather expressing my own thoughts aloud, than intending to ask a question."

"Why, isn't she beautiful?" said Ullesbey.

"Eminently, I think," replied Mary, laughing; "but did you ever give her a hint of your feelings towards her?"

"Upon my word I cannot justly say; had she suspected my feelings, a thousand

circumstances might have given her hints; but do you wish me well, Mrs. Carruthers? I mean, do you wish me to prosper in this suit?"

"Yes, I do. We are very old friends; I have great esteem and regard for you, and love Jaqueline as if she was my sister."

"Then why should not you—if you would have the kindness—why cannot you talk this matter over with her a little?"

"Undoubtedly I will, Mr. Ullesbey; only do not you be too sanguine; for there is something particular in Jaqueline's turn of mind."

"Is she ambitious?" said he.

"No, I think not—no."

"You will lay me under an obligation," returned Rupert, "which the powers of language are utterly incapable—— Ah, you may laugh—but I cannot fix, I declare, upon a fit epithet for such an obligation."

"Everlasting seems as good as any other," said Mary: after which she immediately went up to her cousin Jaqueline's room; but not finding her, she looked into

the saloon, where Miss Cothelston sat working alone, who no sooner perceived Mary than she flew towards her, made sure of the door, compelled her to sit down, and insisted upon her listening to another course of secrets.

"Be quick, Clara, if you have any thing to tell me," observed Mrs. Carruthers; "for I have been below nearly an hour already, and must see Jaqueline before I go."

"My dear, you and Jaqueline are eternally getting into each other's pockets, I think; and I am supposed to be as nearly related to you as she is. Why cannot you vouchsafe some attention now and then, to what concerns me? I take interest enough, heaven knows, in your affairs. When did you hear from your husband?"

"No longer ago than by last night's post: I brought the letter here on purpose to show it to you among the rest."

"Thank you a million times; I shall like to read it beyond all imagination! And talking of letters, who d'ye think my father has had one from? I'd be bound to give

you twelve hundred guesses, and you would not hit upon it; though his letter comes from the army in Spain as well as yours."

"I have a notion that so many guesses would be unnecessary," said Mary. "Sir Poole Preston, perhaps?"

"You heard that before, I'm certain."

"No, I assure you; I have been talking on a very different subject."

"Upon your honour, Mary, you will not repeat what I am going to tell you; you won't talk of it at least, till the thing is public and avowed?"

"So much I freely promise," replied the other.

"You shall hear then," said Clara. "A long letter arrived yesterday, from Sir Poole to my father, written, just as a man writes to the most confidential relation he has, with a full circumstantial account of the campaign, entering upon a grand universal view of all the operations, quite penetrating the designs of our commander in chief; and, in short, an uncommonly able production, Mary; what we should hardly have ex-

pected from Sir Poole Preston, on so great a scale—although one would have thought he might know something of the cavalry department."

"Of that, if any," replied Mrs. Carruthers.

"But he doesn't content himself," continued Miss Coltheston, "with the cavalry, I can tell you: nor does he give little, dull, formal, technical details about any branch of the service;—oh no. He treats the whole in a comprehensive way: and you will be sorry to find that he abuses every arrangement that has been made, since the Peninsular war broke out, in every department of our army: cavalry, artillery, waggon train, commissariat, and every single thing. Your accounts, I hope, afford us a pleasanter prospect."

"Bentley," replied her cousin, "never ventures to offer an opinion about the General's plan of campaign: of which, he says, no officer of his own rank in the army (and his, by the bye, is one step higher than Sir

Poole Preston's, if that signified) can possibly form a judgment."

"Of course, my dear, your husband must know best," said the other, with her usual sneer; "but if you doubt that Sir Poole's is an uncommonly clever letter,—I refer you to my father, that's all. Not that I keep you here, to talk of military news: the postscript is the important part to this family: ay, to this family, and to our connexions, Mary, of whom Major Carruthers must always, now, be considered as one."

"You are very obliging," said her cousin, laughing.

"Sir Poole observes in his postscript," resumed Clara, "that, disapproving of the manner in which things are conducted in Spain and Portugal, and having become heartily tired of the army as a profession—he would return home, to-morrow, if he could do so with credit: he should better serve his country, he thinks, either by getting into parliament, or by taking an active share in the business of his own county. He then goes on to say (and I knew he

would find it out, some time or other), that true happiness is only to be met with in domestic life: which makes him desirous —now mark this, I beg and beseech you— of marrying into the family of some worthy and honourable neighbour, of general estimation and good descent: and he pointedly asks my father, whether he would ADVISE such a measure; assuring him, that the article of fortune will never be taken into his consideration. This, it would be mere prudery to deny, is sufficiently intelligible. I always thought well of Sir Poole; and felt persuaded, that whatever might appear of wildness or levity in his youthful career—— not but that he is a YOUNG man still, decidedly; of pleasing person—pleasing rather than otherwise—and allowed, on all hands, to be the first match, perhaps, in the county, under nobility; so that my lòt, you see, will be no such disadvantageous one."

"You know Sir Poole Preston much better than I do, Clara; and I trust, therefore, you are not deceiving yourself."

"So like you—all that caution and he-

sitation!" said Miss Cothelston. "What, then, you don't perceive, I suppose, that he desires an alliance with my father?"

"Pardon me, I think that pretty clear; but if my mind must be spoken, I question yet whether he may not allude to Jaqueline; for his admiration of her, at one time, could scarcely be mistaken."

"He never showed Jaqueline the slightest mark of attention, in the whole course of his life!" cried Clara, in a sharp harsh tone, and red with displeasure.

"That point I have no inclination to dispute," replied her cousin; "and so, when the Baronet returns to England, you will be Lady Preston, I presume?"

"Cold enough, Mrs. Bentley Carruthers; but I comprehend what is in your thoughts: you consider me as having given something too like encouragement to Rupert Ullesbey; and the accusation has some weight, I must candidly own."

"You need not vex yourself upon that subject, Clara."

"Very well: if you think so, who are

tolerably punctilious, I have no reason to be dissatisfied with my own conduct. But Rupert is a deserving young man; and it would shock one to make him very unhappy."

"Then you must be gratified to hear that you will not make him unhappy at all."

"He has a sensitive heart, I do really believe."

"Very likely, my dear; but he will not feel *that*."

"How do you know?"

"Surely, Clara, you have no wish to grieve him; you can have no—— Stay a moment; don't I hear Jaqueline's voice in the garden?"

"Not a syllable, remember, of what I have been saying to you, Mary."

"Trust me," said the other, and ran out of the room, in pursuit of her younger cousin.

During all this conversation, Rupert, who made no doubt of Mrs. Carruthers having been in consultation with Jaqueline, remained in the library, pensive: but de-

termining to await the crisis like a man,—he took down a volume of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," and fancied he had been reading. "Deuce take it!" said he, finding his thoughts wander: "this is miserable work; more like a miss in a story-book, than a person of firm character, who never had a grain of romantic nonsense in his disposition. If she pleases to listen to me—well and good: if not,—here I am, much as I was before: reasonably well off, in a world where there are other pretty women besides those of this family. Let's see," taking up his book once more; "the battle of Durazzo, was n't it? ay—of Durazzo." To enforce his attention, he now began reading aloud. "'The Varangians claimed the honours of the vanguard.' Varangians! I don't seem to recollect any thing about the Varangians! Well, we shall recover them, probably, as we go on. 'In the first onset, the battle-axes of the strangers made a deep and bloody impression.' Who, the devil, were the strangers? I must hark back again, after all."

While his hand was employed in turning over the leaves, his whole mind (if any part of it had ever been given to the luminous pages of Gibbon) wandered far indeed from the battle of Durazzo. People began to move about the house, and somebody even approached the room where he was prosecuting his studies. Rupert changed colour, and had risen from his place, when the door burst open with some violence, and Squire Cothelston entered, considerably discomposed about the loss of a bag of roots. According to his statement, he had put them away in a sort of hermitage or grotto, and now imagined them to have been pilfered. The grievance of the roots saved Ullesbey from being regaled with Sir Poole Preston's able and comprehensive letter; which, but for this mischance, would have been inflicted upon him to a certainty, with the Squire's comments to boot.

After sitting for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, on thorns, Rupert took the first fair opportunity of withdrawing; and was barely in time to hand Mrs. Bentley

Carruthers into her carriage: but as the servants were standing round them, she could not at that time say much. "You dine here, I find?" said she.

"I was to have dined here. Just tell me, in one word," he whispered, "whether I may keep the engagement?"

"Yes: but take no notice of any thing, this evening. Call to-morrow, about noon, and you will find her alone in the library."

Ullesbey came somewhat late to dinner, choosing rather to hazard a sarcasm from Mr. Cothelston, than to risk the meeting a certain young lady in the room by herself, under the existing awkward state of affairs. He scarcely dared to let his eyes rest upon Jaqueline, all the while he stayed in the house; and once, when he did adventure upon a glance, he thought she looked cross. A sense of imperious duty, no doubt—he being the only man at table, except the master of the house—induced him to ask her (though then only among others) to take a glass of wine; but he hardly knew whether she assented or not, and could give

but a very imperfect account of her bow when they drank together. Clara talked of music in the evening; Jaqueline, however, dissenting, the piano-forte remained unopened: as for Rupert, he sat down to cards with the Squire and two elderly ladies, whose names we have never been able to recover: he was rated by his partner, and went away before ten o'clock—perhaps to enjoy a good night's rest—at least he said to himself twice, as he rode home across the park, that he was not the sort of man to have his sleep disturbed by the caprices of any Miss in existence.

Now had arrived the important day, and even the hour, big with the fate of Rupert Ullesbey, Esq. He attended punctually to his appointment, and was ushered into the library by his old friend Spelman, though with a face so grave, that Rupert feared he might be but too well informed of the reception that was in store for him. In a few minutes Miss Jaqueline herself appeared, with rather a hurried manner, though not perceptibly embarrassed.

"Good morning, Mr. Ullesbey," said

she; "we have been trying your favourite glee about rose odours, blue waves, and gondolas; but without making much progress, I'm afraid." Rupert simpered, bowed, and cleared his voice for a speech. "Is there any news to-day?" continued Jaqueline, talking as fast as she could: "we are in hourly expectation, I am told—for nobody reads the papers to less purpose than myself—of a battle in Spain."

All this evasion was no joke to Ullesbey; and he resolved to be put out of the pain of suspense, one way or the other.

"Miss Jaqueline," said he, firmly, "you had some conversation, I fancy, with Mrs. Bentley Carruthers, yesterday."

"Conversation? true: so I had—now you put me in mind. To be sure, I had: but you were not in earnest?"

"Never more so, since the hour I was born."

"And you actually mean to announce yourself as a lover of mine! Do pray tell me a little about it."

"I perceive," he replied, "that my suit

will be unsuccessful: however, I am glad to see you in good humour—come what will. Your father has been an excellent friend to me; for more than eight years I have now lived with your family on the most intimate terms—I always admired you—and am, by this time, convinced (which, I frankly admit, was not the case at our first acquaintance), that, if you should approve of my addresses, you would make me the happiest of men: while no endeavours should be wanting on my part, to—to—— "

"Make me the happiest of women, probably," replied Jaqueline. "This is an odd business, I protest; and what I thought of as little, as an offer from the Emperor of China."

"My income, I fear," said he, "is not such as to entitle me to aspire—— "

"Your income, Sir, is very well: I have heard the amount of it a thousand times from my father after dinner of a day—when, to tell you the truth, I was heartily sick of the topic. But you do not, surely, expect

me to give you a serious answer——I have no great dislike, if you come to that—— Intimate terms, do you say? yes, indeed: we have been always on a thorough friendly footing; and," she added with more gravity, "I should be sure of your temper: surer, than you would be of mine, Mr. Ullesbey."

"If you will condescend," said he, "to listen to what I have to urge upon one subject, I trust I can satisfactorily explain that part of my behaviour which must have appeared the most questionable to you. There certainly existed at one period, what might have looked like some particular understanding between your sister and myself—what might have looked like mutual regard perhaps, or attachment, perhaps—— "

"Not in the least, Mr. Rupert Ullesbey, according to my judgment. Since you first came here, a kind of boy from the university, I never supposed you to be more attached to Clara, than—Clara was to you."

"Then what should hinder me," cried Rupert, brightening up, "from hoping for

encouragement, where I am most truly attached?"

"Are you sure of that?" said she: "upon my word, this is a strange affair—— I really don't know——Mary Carruthers says you are a very love-able person.—— Well, Sir, you may talk to my father about it, if you please, and see what objections he will find out."

This said, she darted out of the room, to the disappointment of Mr. Ullesbey, whose spirits increased every moment, and who began to think that making love was a mighty pretty amusement.

CHAPTER XI.

Rupert, however impatient, had no opportunity of conferring with Mr. Cothelston till the sixteenth of August, after the interval of an entire day; and Clara, who at the very same moment, wished to put some more questions to her father about the famous postscript to Sir Poole Preston's letter, of which we have heard so much, was out of humour at finding him engaged with Ullesbey.

She solaced herself, however, by a walk upon the high road leading to Molesden —for Molesden, long uppermost in her thoughts, now ruled there without any effort at control,—and before she could decide to her satisfaction whether the conveniences or inconveniences of having Major Carruthers and her cousin for such near

neighbours, were likely to predominate—she arrived at a rising ground from whence the Baronet's woods appeared to peculiar advantage; and laughed outright at the idea of any competition from the Carruthers branch of the connexion.

Just as her mind was easy upon that head, a little silver-haired old man, whom she knew to be employed in some capacity about the stables at Molesden, came galloping towards Peterstow, on a pony as ancient as himself, over the turf by the road side.

On perceiving Miss Cothelston, he drew up; and Clara, in a disposition to be gracious, said something to him about the weather; but he looked extremely dismal. "Why, Stokes," said she, "you seem in a hurry!"

"Mrs. Epps sent me over to 'quaint Mr. Cothelston, Ma'am. Very bad errand, Ma'am—— wish, with all my soul, he'd never had nothing to do with soldiering, and them foreign wars."

"What do you say? Has any harm happened?"

"My poor master! Ma'am—— An express come down to Mrs. Epps, this morning."

"How? hey! he's not killed?"

"I wish I could say so, Miss: but you'll hear all the accounts on't, by the time you get back; and my orders is against stopping, on no pretence whatever." Away he scampered, leaving Clara, who had about as much affection, in truth, for Sir Poole Preston, as for old Stokes—in a state of disappointment, producing perhaps equal pain with many real crosses in love.

This news put an end to her stroll, as may well be imagined; and on re-entering the garden gate at Peterstow, she met Rupert Ullesbey, just emerged from the Squire's study. There could be no mistaking his air of universal delight and satisfaction: but it would scarcely be believed, that such was the vanity of Miss Cothelston, as to lead her to account for this appearance of happiness, by the supposition

that Rupert had heard of his rival's fate, and was internally gratified at having the field thus left open to him, with a fair opportunity of recommending himself in a quarter where, she had always paid him the compliment to take for granted, he most desired to be acceptable. Clara, at first, designed to have passed him in silence, with a deep sigh and a tragical glance; but that intention was frustrated by the cordial and somewhat rough shake of the hand which Rupert stopped to give her. "This is a blow upon us all, and to some perhaps, an irreparable affliction," said Miss Cothelston, struggling all the time, but in vain, to withdraw her hand. "I conclude you have heard this woful news from Spain?"

"Woful!" he replied; "'twas a bloody business, certainly; but decidedly glorious for—— Oh, poor Sir Poole!—ah, poor fellow! you were adverting to our loss of him—— melancholy thing, indeed. All of you knew him much more than myself, though; and, to confess the truth, either great joys or great sorrows have a tendency to make one

selfish. I was so full of my own good fortune, and your father's most affectionate kindness, that when Spelman told me of the accounts that had been brought from Molesden, I hardly was so much shocked as I should have been at another time. I trust, Miss Cothelston, we have no feelings between us but of the most friendly description—such as should belong to a brother and sister."

"Sir!" said Clara.

"Yes: to a brother and sister, I say. Can it be, that you are not apprised of my proposals for dearest Jaqueline? which are now, I am proud and grateful to declare, accepted by her, with the most flattering concurrence of your father and mother."

Clara looked at him steadfastly—was convinced of his being serious—attempted to speak—and burst into an agony of tears.

"Good heaven, Miss Cothelston!" cried Rupert.

"Stop, Sir, stay," said she, as well as her sobbing would let her; "you must n't go away in an error: you were not aware,

I believe, that Sir Poole—that poor dear Sir Poole and I—— perhaps you may not know, that if Sir Poole had survived—we were about to be—— that is—we were engaged to each other. Excuse me: I can talk no more." She burst away from him, mortified anew, vexed to the very soul, and now crying without stint or interruption, while Rupert walked on the opposite way, extremely hurt at having spoken incautiously with so little attention to her feelings.

Of this intelligence from the Peninsula, it is necessary to give a more detailed account; which can only be done by resuming the series of letters from Bentley Carruthers to his wife; one of which, brought to England by special favour of the officer who came over with the despatches, reached Mary by the London post that same afternoon: it bore date from Talavera la Reyna, on July the thirty-first.

"My last was sent away early in the morning of the twenty-first, in the course of which forenoon, our whole force marched

with the hourly expectation of meeting the French; but just when our interest was at the highest, we had orders to pile arms; and instead of the enemy, the Spaniards began to make their appearance. They kept passing before our line till noon. Many about me pronounced upon their numbers, in the round decisive manner not unusual among our young gentlemen, and with as little pains in computation, as if they had been a score or so of carpenters and scene-shifters produced for an army on Drury Lane boards. These ready assertors seemed inclined to put them down at forty thousand souls—not a man more or less. They exceeded my previous idea of them; the cavalry tolerable to look at, the infantry better clothed and accoutred than late reports had led us to believe; and the artillery I should certainly describe as the best of all. Soon after this exhibition, we received an intimation that a great Spanish general would inspect our army, towards five in the afternoon: at which hour accordingly, the line turned out for him, and he rode along it in all due form

with a suitable cortège of the grandees belonging to us. A mean-looking, stupid, paralytic, unmilitary, old —— now, my own dear Mary, I forbear adding the substantive to which all those epithets were applied by our people, the more particularly as I quite agree with a certain Dowager, who told Lord Chesterfield that an old MAN was the worse animal of the two.

"We moved again betimes next day, and heard much firing upon the march; passed our friends the Spaniards, who were drawn out in two lines on the left of the road; their cavalry having been reinforced during the night, by the division of one of their truest, gallantest, and most patriotic officers, the Duke of Albuquerque. Soon after we had passed our allies, the spires of Talavera began to be seen, and from the firing which was continually kept up in front of the town, we were led to suppose that we should fall in with the French every instant; but at four we came to our station, and (as things afterwards turned out) took up our ground for the night in

olive-groves, almost close to the town. The Spaniards now marched through Talavera, and encamped with that place in their rear; for the enemy had drawn off previously to take a position behind the river—the Alberche—which runs into the Tagus somewhere hereabouts. They left a rear-guard (only cavalry) to skirmish; who skirmished however with such effect, as to check the entire Spanish army. My dearest, every individual minute of the twenty-third was lost, because the Spaniards were not ready; but the twenty-fourth we settled must be a day of business. Before daybreak, therefore, we formed in rear of a wood, about half cannon-shot from the French position. We crossed the river, not knee deep just at that part, and while advancing in breathless expectation, the day broke speedily, but—the birds were flown. We were now in no very agreeable dilemma: having no food, we could not stay there, and no orders were as yet given out, though we thought, and indeed hoped, they would be, to push forward to Madrid. While we remained wish-

ing and conjecturing, I must mention an incident which would have been of no kind of consequence at any other time, but will affect you perhaps, when you shall hear that in the course of the subsequent battles we have lost a very old acquaintance, though one, of whom I am afraid it may be said that

> "———few things in his life
> Became him, like the leaving it."

The juncture of our whole force threw me in the way of Sir Poole Preston, whom I had not met with before since we landed at Lisbon. His pretensions seemed to be lowered, he was more natural and cordial in his manner, and not the less agreeable I thought, for a tinge of melancholy, which prevented him from rattling away in the customary style, upon military matters, and political matters, and all matters of every description. In the dearth of provisions then prevailing, Colonel Badbury and myself were lucky enough to have secured something for dinner; wherein we happened to be more fortunate than the

cavalry regiment immediately upon our right; and of this refreshment Preston was very well pleased to partake. He inquired kindly after you, talked of Peterstow with a warmth that was even affectionate (by the way, Mary, I do really believe that he meditated the laying himself at one of their feet), and told us fairly how he hated fighting, restraint, scanty diet, fatigue, and every thing connected with the noble science of war; and how certain it was that he should quit the military line, if he lived to the conclusion of these operations in the Peninsula. Such resolutions, I am truly concerned to say, can never now avail him; for the French on the twenty-sixth, joined by Joseph with a great accession of force, turned upon the Spaniards who had ventured to follow them alone, and drove our allies before them. On the twenty-seventh they again appeared in great strength, upon the Alberche; and the dragoons with a Major General's division"—(here he named the excellent officer, and most estimable member of society, who commanded this

division and afterwards fell in the action) —"pushed on to protect the retreat of the Spaniards. This service they well executed; but so closely were our men pressed by the French, that our army had scarce time before the attack, to take up the following position:—our right to the Spaniards, who were themselves also covered with vineyards, olive-trees, and a plain intersected by many deep ditches. On the left, the olive-groves ceased; from thence the ground gradually rising, terminated in a high conical hill, and beyond that lay a valley, which from its depth and narrowness might almost be called a glen, with bold rocky mountains on the further side. The hill constituted our extreme left; and a considerable length of position that was to occupy—an extent of ground, which on some points necessarily weakened our line. The firing began at seven in the evening, and did not slacken till towards ten; soon after which time all was comparatively still, without any visible change in the situation of either army. During the whole night we were under arms, deriving

our principal amusement from a tremendous cannonade on the right, kept up with unceasing perseverance by our patriotic neighbours, either upon light companies, or patroles, or the 'intrenchant air.' Not that I would be thought to undervalue their exertions, which, as far as they took part in the engagement, were effectual and laudable; for an attempt at the beginning of the conflict to overthrow their position, having utterly failed, the security of our right was from that moment established. After daylight, nearly an hour of suspense; then—to it once more, till about twelve, when the firing drooped; and the French deeming a repast no unpleasant interlude, proceeded to cook their dinners. Meanwhile I am perfectly conscious, my dear, that you, or at all events your uncle Cothelston, will require much fuller details of this battle from me, than in my station, confined nearly to one spot throughout both days, I have the power of giving you. I frequently indeed saw the Commander in Chief; he seemed to be always near us, and by what I hear from

others, he seemed likewise to be always near them; but you are not to suppose that he made us pithy speeches, like Scipio and Hannibal, or rather like what historians have put into their mouths. 'Well done, brigade! Well done, brigade!' was the only eloquence that reached my ears from our indefatigable commander; but the confidence and animation of his countenance were beyond all the speeches that man ever uttered.

"We are come now, Mary, to the second day's battle. The enemy made continued unsuccessful attempts upon the hill on our left; but although many of their guns were dismounted, and some ammunition-waggons blown up, their artillery was scarcely less alert at the end, than at the commencement of the day, and still maintained a most effective fire. All their attacks on the right failed. In the centre, to be sure, they met with partial success, but being ultimately repulsed, and with a heavy loss, their last grand effort was to outflank us, and pass a force through the valley be-

yond the extreme left of our line; which attempt however, a desperately vigorous charge of our dragoons and hussars defeated, though nearly to their own destruction. It was owing to this operation that poor Preston met his death. His regiment having been broken, and (for the moment) scattered, his horse likewise being shot; he was seen on foot, in the middle of the field, in apparent certainty of being killed or taken—beckoned to by some of the —— infantry, and received among their ranks, then under a brisk fire of musquetry. Colonel Fletcher tells me that he wished him to go to the rear, and endeavour to provide himself with another horse, but Sir Poole refused; he said that there was little probability of his getting one, and if he could not be of use, he would, at least, be found in a post of danger at the close of the day. Soon after this he staggered and laid hold of Captain Mainwaring's arm, who asked him if he was hit; but he dropped without making any answer: they found he had been shot in the throat. By what I hear,

he could not have survived his mortal wound above half a minute.

"With the first dawn on the twenty-ninth, we perceived (nor was there, I will venture to assure you, one individual in either of the combined armies, much displeased at perceiving) that the French had crossed the river on their retreat: for my part, I thought of my beloved Mary, when, after hearing the first rumours of a battle which will put so many families into mourning, she should receive my letter and retire to her own room to read it, in comfort of mind and thankfulness to Divine Providence for the preservation of her husband through this long and arduous conflict."

Bentley wrote but little more while he remained in the Peninsula; as his regiment having suffered by ill health, equally with the more direct losses of war, it was sent home to recruit about the middle of the following November.

The ecstacy of the meeting between Major Carruthers and his lovely incomparable wife, as we cannot describe it to our

mind, we shall not attempt to describe at all; though it must be noted, that he arrived in the north-west of England, in time to witness the marriage of Mr. Rupert Ullesbey with Miss Jaqueline Cothelston. Bentley doubted at first, whether his presence would be acceptable at the wedding; but his lady (on the most confidential habits with her cousin) soon put him at his ease upon that score, and the event perhaps gave as complete satisfaction to him, as to any of the party assembled. Clara indeed said it was a deplorably flat business—no real love on either side, and that their tempers would never accord. This union however, as if merely to spite her, turned out to be productive of the most essential comfort to them both; and seems likely to do so as long as they shall live. Jaqueline often told Mary Carruthers, that she had never been deceived for an instant in Ullesbey's disposition, which was as invariably mild as she could have expected or desired, while his understanding (she whispered) had proved far beyond what she ever gave him credit

for. Rupert, on the other hand, declared (and, what was more, he said so in the fourth year after their marriage), that he could not discover a fault in his wife, beyond—what he was pleased to call a little—quickness of temper. So much for their lot; our business henceforward being to follow the very different fate of that unhappy person whom we last heard of in several of Major Carruthers' early letters, as an exile from his country, picking up, in company with some vagabond of his own stamp, a precarious disgraceful subsistence in Spain or Portugal, by every species of fraud, carried on chiefly at the expense of the rawest and shallowest of our younger officers.

CHAPTER XII.

After the British forces had retired from the heart of Spain, and taken up their quarters upon the south-eastern frontier of Portugal, the two adventurers whose fortunes we are to trace—like vermin, which, though supposed to be exterminated by the hunting and ransacking of a barn, begin to show themselves again cautiously, when all the riot has subsided—now re-infested the English out-posts; and in the comparative idleness that prevailed, these swindlers looked forward to (greater danger of detection undoubtedly, but) proportionable gains if they played their cards with discretion. As to the one who had already been discovered by Serjeant Holtofte, he was willing to flatter himself that nobody else knew any thing about him; nor were his expect-

ations of plunder the less confident, from the consciousness that more than one officer of the guards had recognised his companion to be the same person, who, under the name of the Comte de Norbrun, had obtained perhaps fame, certainly notoriety, a few years ago in London, instead of being sent out of the kingdom, or committed to gaol and punished as a common cheat and impostor: either of which processes might legally, and with a peculiar propriety, have been put in force against him. The Englishman thought that the reputation of his coadjutor, being founded upon something interesting and marvellous, and not altogether unconnected with fashion, at home—would probably be the means of drawing many about them out of curiosity, whom they might afterwards entice to gambling. Here, however, one of those provoking crosses awaited him, to which a life of roguery must constantly be subject, and for this reason; because no rogue could ever yet carry through all his measures, by his own resources alone. It happened in this

present instance, that the foreigner, much the older man of the two, had been led to the sort of knavery which he professed, as well by natural disposition as by speculations of profit: not that he, at any time, had believed his own powers to be superhuman; but he loved the imposture; the older he grew, the more he was besotted by all the mysterious impious nonsense, which he had picked up in various parts of the continent with a view of supporting his pretensions; and to produce an effect upon others by terror, and work upon their feelings in his mode, afforded him the greatest pleasure he could experience. This propensity, to a certain extent ensured his success, as is natural; but the friend now in partnership with him, was quick enough to perceive that M. de Norbrun verged towards his dotage; that his ordinary conversation, even when nobody was at hand to be taken in by it, had become more wild, absurd, and unintelligible than ever; and that his mind being ill at ease—the obvious consequence of a wicked life—his temper was soured,

and had grown to the last degree perverse and unmanageable. The other knave therefore, heartily sick of De Bahrdt, Mauvillon, Weishaupt, Retzer, and all the Illuminati that ever plagued mankind—remembering also, with remorse and horror, some experiments of his own in the same line, which had been aided by his present companion, would fain have abandoned that branch of their business, for other frauds more consonant to the universal habits of the profligate. But upon that point the Comte was immoveable; and the other, at once, pronounced him insane, on finding that he had promised two young men of the name of Henderstone, lately come over from England on a visit to some of their friends with the army, to show them more wondrous and dreadful proofs of his art, than any he had before exhibited; in order to witness which, they were to repair by the first glimpse of dawn, on a morning particularly named, to a small copse upon the western extremity of a chain of bleak barren hills, just visible from the village, where these Mr. Hender-

stones, as well as M. de Norbrun himself, had taken up their abode. The English partner of this magus, or philosophus, or whatever degree he had attained in the lodges of the Illuminés, after vainly exhausting his reasoning, rhetoric, and breath, in argument against this freak and every other of a similar description, was content at last, seeing that the folly must have its course, to offer no further opposition; but, on the contrary, to make the best of any effect that might be excited by it, in the minds of those two youths. He repaired accordingly, on the evening before the meeting, to the house where M. de Norbrun lodged; who, accosting him by his real name—for Walters was the appellation that he had assumed in the Peninsula—regaled him with a speech which seemed to have been well considered, of nearly a quarter of an hour in duration; reproached him with the utmost bitterness, truth, and offensiveness; upbraiding him so poignantly for a variety of despicable and unprincipled acts of his former career, that Walters was

stung to the heart; particularly when he bethought him, that with THE WHOLE of his iniquity, this Frenchman was by no means acquainted. Nevertheless, Mr. Walters, for so we shall call him as long as he chose to call himself by that name, had no disposition to come to a quarrel; he did indeed purpose to abandon Norbrun, and to do so as soon as he conveniently could, without the least imaginable ceremony: but it was not his practice to bring on an open breach with any of his intimates while a possibility remained of making use of them. Accordingly, with a degree of patience that was wonderful, if not commendable, he endured all these insults, absolutely forcing nature all through the evening, in exertions to coax M. le Comte into good humour again: he offered to accompany him to the scene of his proposed interview with the young Englishmen, to assist in the deception by every means in his power, and take any part of the performance that might be assigned to him. But nothing could move the inflexible taci-

turnity of his companion, after he had once delivered himself of the abuse with which his mind seemed to labour; without asking Walters to eat or drink, without so much as calling for a light, Norbrun suffered him to sit on in his company, enjoying a malignant satisfaction in hearing the other still further demean himself by ineffectual supplication to be once more admitted as an accomplice in some scheme of baseness and iniquity, till nearly eleven o'clock at night. M. de Norbrun then started up, as if he had been called from without; he looked about for his hat, and speaking for the first time that he had uttered a word during upwards of two hours, desired Mr. Walters to open the casement and tell him what kind of a night it was.

"Darkness itself," said Walters; "and raining fast."

"Right," said the other. "I knew the weather would suit the deed. You heard it thunder?"

"Not I," replied Walters: "what do you want of your hat?"

"I go to prepare for the arrival of those countrymen of yours."

"Nonsense! you are not going out to-night?"

"You will follow me, or watch me," said De Norbrun, "if you think proper: but, if you do," with a terrible oath, "I would not answer for your life till to-morrow!"

With that he ran furiously down the stairs—hurried out of the house, throwing the main door wide open behind him; and when Walters perceived that, after all, he had left both his hat and cloak in the room above, he felt certain of what he had for many months suspected,—namely, that his French associate was irreparably distracted; and judged it as well to quit the house before the other should return meditating any mischief against him. Not that Walters went home to sleep quietly, or to sleep at all: he thought of the guilt with which M. de Norbrun had reproached him—he thought of the guilt of which some other men might accuse him—and above all, he

thought of the guilt which that Being—whose existence (however he might have spoken or written upon the subject) he never could contrive to doubt—knew him to have perpetrated. Such reflections were only varied by wild frightful imaginations, the fruit of melancholy, or an evil conscience: at one moment he fancied that he saw a pale figure standing in the corner of his room, closely buttoned up in a great coat, with a coloured handkerchief tied over the lower part of his face, for fear of the night air;—then, that he heard the voice of one Holtofte, in different parts of the house, through the whole remainder of the night. As the darkness departed, his horrors were likewise diminished, and he began to reflect with less of consternation, and more of curiosity, upon the extremely strange departure of M. de Norbrun from his lodging on the evening preceding. As soon as he could see his way, he went back to the Count's quarters; where, however, he only learnt that the other had not been at home since; and while musing upon this occurrence, he

slowly paced along in the direction of the spot (to him very familiar) where Norbrun had appointed the Mr. Henderstones to be witnesses of his terrific power and secrets.

Mr. Walters was soon overtaken, as most probably he designed to be, by those two gentlemen; who having established an intimacy with his friend the Comte, were of course also well known to him. The usual greeting took place: and Walters, had he been in a disposition to be amused by any thing, would have been diverted by the deportment of those young men. They pretended to treat the whole affair with ridicule, calling themselves asses for having been induced to leave their beds at that hour upon such an errand—while they were manifestly under the influence of considerable awe, and no slight degree of anxiety—not to say apprehension.

The latter feeling, had Mr. Walters been properly himself that morning, he would have inflamed to the utmost, by those means which were always at his disposal: but in the present state of things,

he was more than doubtful whether the Illuminé would receive him with the usual appearance of confidence and cordiality; or, indeed, whether the former would be in the place that they had determined upon, at all—so extraordinary was the manner in which he had left his house, and rushed out alone without even a hat upon his head, in such a rough and deplorable night. In fact, Walters scarcely expected to find him otherwise than totally bereft of his understanding: his conjectures, therefore, as to what might occur, should the Count keep his original engagement, were equally unsatisfactory with those of his companions, and much more alarming. He replied to the questions of the Messieurs Henderstone, shortly and evasively; and, by the time they had reached the scene of action—a small wood, skirting the outermost of a chain of hills—all the three, engaged with their own thoughts, had sunk into silence. By a path which only permitted them to walk one by one, they proceeded through the entire length of the coppice, and came

out upon the bleak brow of the hill on the other side.

" He is not so punctual as he promised to be," observed Mr. Henderstone.

" And, most likely, will never come near the place," said his brother George: " Did he mean to make fools of us, think ye?"

" Practical jokes, or any other jokes, are not much in his line," observed Walters.

" Where then are we likely to meet with him?" said one of the young men.

" Upon my life and honour, I cannot satisfy you," replied Mr. Walters, speaking more freely than before, and conceiving hopes, that his late partner in fraud had absconded altogether.

The Henderstones, after whispering to each other, seemed to have concluded, that if they wished to avoid the being universally laughed at for this disappointment, their best plan would be to propitiate Mr. Walters;—whom they accordingly asked to breakfast with them on their return: and when he understood what they were talking about—for he was now in one of his

profoundest fits of absence—he accepted their invitation. As they marched back, in the same order, through the thicket; the leading file, Mr. George Henderstone, perceived a still smaller path, if it had any right to be called an actual path, which diverged from them towards the centre of the coppice. "This Count de—what's his name, may have been here before us," said he; "shall we explore this track, before we give him over for good?"

"No use," cried his brother.

"No use," added Walters.

"You won't persuade me to budge a foot out of the direct road home," said the elder Henderstone; "touch him off a halloo, though, if you think there's the least chance of his being any where hereabouts—louder, man! louder!"

George Henderstone, meanwhile, half laughing, half in earnest, shouted and whooped according to the most improved English methods; but his noises were only replied to by the snarling snappish bark of a dog.

"Come along, then," said one of them; "we have earned a hearty breakfast by this expedition, if we have done nothing more: I say, Mr. Walters, if every morning of our lives—— Why d'ye stand still? Did you think you heard any other sound besides the yelping of that cur?"

"I beg your pardon—you were speaking to me?" said Walters.

"By all that's potent," cried George Henderstone, as a low, shaggy, whitish, crooked-legged animal, made its appearance from among the trees,—"this is the Count's little dog."

"No such thing," said the elder brother: "is it, Mr. Walters?"

Walters, however, was considering whether he had seen the beast in the house after M. de Norbrun sallied forth the night preceding; for that she had been lying upon one of the chairs in the early part of the evening, he fully recollected.

"Is it indeed the Count's dog?" repeated Mr. Henderstone.

"A good deal like her, certainly," replied Walters, turning from him.

"Say no more," cried George Henderstone, leading the way, closely followed by his brother, into the narrower path from whence the dog had run; "we'll track him down, we'll trace him to his den, as they do bears in—— O Lord! look there —look there, Frank!"

He edged off, and making way for the other to come forward—they saw the legs of a man, the rest of the body being hidden by the foliage, dangling down from a tree. Neither of the Mr. Henderstones seemed disposed to stir. Walters now came up: he gazed upon this spectacle for a full minute, or more; then advanced with all necessary composure, examined the body (which verified the immediate suspicions of all the party), and nodded; as much as to say, could his companions have looked into his heart, "Matters might have ended much more unsatisfactorily than in this way." They cut down the dead man—Mr. Walters affirming, that he had doubtless hung

there not less than seven or eight hours,—went back to their quarters in the village again, and, on recovering the use of their tongues, the Messieurs Henderstone kept theirs in exercise, with scarce any respite, during all the rest of the day; relating to every officer whom they met, the catastrophe of the wretched Norbrun; suggesting explanations of it themselves, and encouraging the guesses of other people: many of whom attributed the act to his own hands; some, to advanced parties of the French; others, to the Spanish irregulars, or the contrabandistas; while some there still were, who from ill-will to the whole Spanish nation, scrupled not to lay the same imputation upon their regular troops. Walters indulged not in such idle speculations: as the friend of the deceased, indeed, he spared himself no trouble in endeavouring to learn what effects he might have died possessed of at that place; but when there appeared to be none, or none at least that he could discover, he meditated a retreat from the British advanced posts, into the interior of

Spain; and being unprovided with a valet at this juncture, he resolved to commence his movement to the eastward, as soon as he could meet with a servant who suited him. Now Mr. Walters had observed in one Daniel Draggett, a private in—we forget what regiment, who waited upon an officer of our worthy adventurer's acquaintance, certain requisites, which he thought (although not unattended perhaps by their partial inconvenience) might, upon the whole, be turned to account in his service. For instance, in bad quarters, where the country was exhausted, and, even for very high prices, little or no provision could be procured, Walters had often heard the colonel who employed him, speak in something like the following terms, respecting the attainments of his man Draggett: "Let that fellow Daniel alone: for I don't know how it is, but while nobody else hardly gets any thing to eat, for love or money; my table's as well supplied every day, as if we were within a dozen miles of Covent Garden market. I sit down in state, Sir; I

up with my knife and fork—I ask no questions—and I see smoking before me—a couple of fowls, we'll say—or perhaps, a goose—or a piggy wiggy, very likely." That all this was more than rhodomontade, Mr. Walters had many opportunities of assuring himself; and feeling desirous of engaging about his own person, an individual of such activity and resources, he forthwith opened a treaty with the accomplished Draggett; and was fortunate enough, even at their first conference, to induce that able politician to embrace exactly his view of the points in negotiation. The consequence was, that, about the beginning of the following November, Daniel Draggett deserted; and, in company with Mr. Walters, crossed the Guadiana one night, on their route to Alicant, where it had already been resolved upon that they should embark for England.

CHAPTER XIII.

Walters had provided a couple of horses for himself and his man, and a third horse for their baggage; so that no delay occurred on the eastern bank of the river.

Now Daniel, being a fellow of cheerful temper and natural spirits, prattled away briskly during the first day's journey, which his master tolerated, if he did not encourage: but as they proceeded, Mr. Walters grew more and more reserved; and we can only account for it by the following considerations. Never having been so far towards the south of Spain before, he knew nothing of the face of the country: he was extremely discomposed at the immense intervals between the towns; he had no great delight either in the thick woods through which they rode, sometimes for half a day

together, without meeting a soul; nor was he materially relieved when the forest country changed for barren moors, which seemed to afford them an extensive prospect, merely that they might be convinced of the utter solitude around them; while his forlorn feelings could only find consolation from one companion, whom, under these circumstances, he began to dread and distrust. In which way could that companion best be managed? that was the question which now principally occupied the mind of Mr. Walters. Ought he, with a view of ingratiating himself, to favour the familiarity for which the other was sufficiently disposed? he thought not. Those sort of people (he considered) have often a counterfeit good humour, and reckless profligate air of joviality, but no kindly affections. Ought he, on the contrary, to assume the master and superior—which, by the wages that he had offered, he might well suppose himself entitled to do—and awe his attendant, by keeping him at a distance? After much doubt he judged the latter to be the prudent course; and was satisfied with his

reasoning, when, upon desiring in an authoritative tone to look at the pistols with which he had supplied Mr. Draggett, that ingenious personage gave them up; permitting himself to be disarmed without any difficulty, though not without a hint, conveyed in the form of a grin, that he guessed at what was passing in his master's mind. There were moments in each day, nevertheless, when the latter, not particularly enraptured with examining into the present state of his own heart and the tendency of his former career, panted for some intercourse with a fellow-creature; and hoping, that, by this time, he had instilled into his servant a proper notion of their respective situations, and the sort of behaviour which he should require, Mr. Walters vouchsafed to unbend a little.

"Now that we have gone so far to the southward," said he, "as to be completely quit of the English and Portuguese, I should think, Daniel, we might bear up towards the river again; and, notwithstanding it may lengthen the journey, get into a more

frequented road, and among the large towns, such as Ciudad Real or Calatrava."

"Bless ye, no," replied Draggett; "they'll be chuck full of soldiers—French soldiers too, ten to one: I'm sure they've had time enough to advance; and then where are you? They're certain to find us out, for the deuce of three words together can I speak, in any language but my own."

"What road would you take then?" said the other peevishly.

"Smack through the mountains, to be sure."

Walters looked offended at the flippancy with which he answered.

"Right over the mountain, *Sir*," returned the deserter.

His master, though he didnot relish the counsel, chose not to oppose it; and after riding on silently for a mile or so, Daniel Draggett appeared to think, it was his turn now to open the conversation.

"That friend of yours, I doubt, that they found a-swinging in the wood—— "

"What?" cried Walters with a frown and stare of reprehension.

"I doubt, *Sir*," continued his man, who seemed to suppose that by introducing an additional monosyllable, he reconciled every speech to deference and good manners, "that gemman, I take it, was his own executioner."

"The subject is not an agreeable one to me," said Mr. Walters. "Have you ever been in this part of Spain before, Daniel?"

"Never, Sir. I went on straight with the rest of 'em, of course, from the place where that there fight was; and never left quarters afterwards, till us two come to this agreement. A roughish affair—that set-to at the end of July."

"My friend and I," observed his master, "had parted from the track of the army, only a day before the battle of the Alberche."

"I'll answer for 't you had; ha, ha, ha!" cried the other with a loud rude laugh. "Trust you two conjurors for that."

Here again the countenance of Mr.

Walters expressed decided disapprobation; upon which his valet repeated the same exact sentence, with the word "Sir" at the end; and thenceforward, Walters discountenanced all communication between them, excepting just what necessity required.

Either through misinformation or miscalculation, they erred, as usual, in their estimate of this day's journey; they were delayed, by having to ascend into the district (well known since the time of Cervantes, in every part of the world) called the Brown Mountain; and were obliged to travel between three and four hours in profound darkness, before the sight of a twinkling from a neighbouring valley, warned them of their approach to the little town of Zafra. They rode in with as much confidence and presumption, as if they had been a couple of general officers at the head of a division; but the place was full of half-armed Spanish infantry, vexed and mortified by a recent severe check, which had no more improved their courtesy than their discipline. Our cavalier and his attendant,

therefore, could not literally procure house-room for themselves, stabling for their horses, or provender for either. They tried blustering, in vain; they tried cajoling, in vain; and with heavy hearts, having forded the rivulet above the town, they laboured anew at eleven o'clock at night, up a steeper, a loftier, and a bleaker branch of the Sierra, than any they had crossed before. The little remaining spirit of Walters seemed now about to fail him; he sighed twice or thrice piteously, and observing that his horse could scarcely drag one foot after the other, he condescended once more to hold a council of war with the great Daniel Draggett. The vigour of the latter, however, had by no means given way as yet, and fortunately never appeared less likely to desert him than at this juncture; the fact being, that Daniel, in the progress of their sulky ride, had taken a full survey of his own situation, and come to the conclusion, that his best course would be (at least till he should get back to England at the other's expense) to make himself what he

called—and perhaps thought—a real good servant to Mr. Walters. This point being settled, for Daniel was apt to act decidedly one way or the other, he continued to exert himself, actively, cheerfully, and effectively; nay, he even tried to mend his manners; and, though the effort was not remarkably happy, still, in difficulties like the present, nobody could have been more successful in preventing his master from yielding altogether to the torpor suggested by melancholy and despair. At his recommendation Mr. Walters consented to proceed a little further, and to halt and sleep if he could, but certainly to remain for the night, where-ever they might next meet with the shelter of trees: being obliged, perforce, to postpone all thoughts of getting at any refreshment till the day broke. They found it piercing cold, as they crossed one of the highest ridges of the mountain; the level ground on the top of which did not last long, but sunk at once into a deep wood; and so abrupt was the descent, that our travellers were fain to alight, and lead their

horses down the hill; Walters fretting no little during the operation, at the perpetual stumbling of his, over the enormous loose stones that lay in their way: not to add that he also bruised his own shins full as often as was pleasant. Mr. Walters stopped before he finally plunged into the wood, and by the faint glimmering of a star or two, endeavoured to collect some notion of the ground before them. They appeared to be about half way down when the trees commenced, which from thence extended immeasurably, in one black, thick, gloomy mass, filling the narrow valley at the bottom, and covering for many a mile the sides of the opposite mountain. Soon every thing was lost to their sight, from the interminable shade of tall trees and overhanging boughs, which darkening as they advanced, shut out even their partial view of the sky, and the few stars which that night were visible.

"Just here, according to my thinking," observed Daniel Draggett, "is as good a spot for us to pass the night in, as any we

could have lit upon. As yet we're upon the high road—no doubt on't; but how soon we might miss it if we attempted to go forward, now—or whether, even when daylight do come, we may so easily get into the road again, if we once was to miss it—is more than I'll undertake to say."

"Wretchedly cold, I think," said Mr. Walters.

"Take my great coat then, and button that over your own," replied Daniel; "many a worse night than this have I been abroad in, without any thing so much like a shelter over my head either, as these here trees will give us."

Walters took him at his word, and with his accustomed consideration for one person in the world, applied both great coats to his own use.

"What a string of rare lies one picks up from those folks about Badajos, if one's a mind to hearken to 'em," said Draggett; if you'd believe them, two men like you and me—Mr Walters—Sir, could no more travel about Spain in this easy undependent

kind of way, than they could lay hands upon King Joey at Madrid, and carry him off to my Lord's camp."

"No mischance has befallen us hitherto, I allow," returned his master; "but the danger need not be trifling for all that. In the most peaceable times, these mountains, they say, are frequented but by a lawless crew; and at present society is altogether dissolved, and some five or six undisciplined armies, besides sundry parties of acknowledged irregulars little better than banditti, are sharing with their French invaders in the pillage of the country. As I live and breathe—— I hear the tread of cavalry at this moment!"

"Be quiet," said Draggett.

"What had we better—— "

"Be quiet, I say," cried Draggett again: "I'd rather they were horse than foot, fifty to one. Ay, ay, I hear 'em fast enough; they're on their march, and may never come near us."

Without exchanging another word they

betook themselves to listening; and the sound of some wind instrument from the mountain to the eastward of them, repeatedly caught their ear in the swell of the breeze. After the first strain, Walters thought it grew fainter, and flattered himself that they were moving off in another direction, when again came a blast as loud or louder than ever. Still, he consoled himself by supposing them not to be in fact nearer, although a sudden swell of the wind had brought over the sound so powerfully; and to that comfort he clung—till he heard the splash of their foremost horsemen, through the rivulet in the valley immediately beneath him.

"By George, they're almost upon us," cried Draggett. "Away with you to the left—in among the trees, or any where. Let the horses take their chance."

"Are they French or Spaniards?" said Walters: he said no more however, but followed his man Daniel through weeds and briers, which prevented them from making much progress, till they met with

a disaster which prevented them from making any. They had just struggled through a creeping bramble that entangled them from the neck to the legs, when, on springing beyond it, they both rolled down a steep bank directly into a morass.

"Hollo here, help!" said Walters; "give us your hand, I'm sinking in a quagmire."

"Be still with your bawling," returned the other, "unless you mean to bring a dozen or so of them cut-throat fellows this way."

"But whereabouts are you?" resumed Mr. Walters.

"Who goes there, below the bank?" called out a third voice in Spanish; "stand and answer, or I shall fire upon you."

"Ingleses!" cried Daniel Draggett, in the one solitary word of any foreign tongue that he had acquired since he landed in Portugal.

A parley here ensued, and our travellers, surrounded by armed Spaniards, were led away to a group of officers belonging to

the Duke of Albuquerque's cavalry, who, having dismounted near an enormous pile of boughs previously collected on an open glade, had just set fire to the same, when Mr. Walters and his servant were brought up. The latter party now underwent an examination, conducted however with great candour and liberality; and having convinced the Spaniards that they really were English subjects, all the other falsehoods by which they thought it advisable to account for their being in that predicament, and at that place, were admitted without dispute, and they had the satisfaction of discovering that they had fallen among friends, in every sense of the word. Their horses were sent for immediately—found near the road, on the spot where they had fastened them to a tree, just before their alarm—restored to them, and plentifully fed; as were those deserving characters, Messrs. Walters and Draggett likewise; and they passed the rest of the night, by the fire, with the Spanish officers, eating and drinking their fill, and conversing with

brave, intelligent, and much more honourable men than themselves.

Our cavalier and his follower were not without adventures, during what remained of their journey to Alicant, or rather vexations; for what Walters called disasters, were more properly inconveniences; the worst of which was their losing (and that by their own fault entirely) the smaller of his portmanteaus. Once, however, there is no denying that they were unpleasantly situated; in a lone house near Fuencaliente, among very suspicious people undoubtedly, who gave them some cause for apprehension before they retired to bed; and afterwards induced them, contrary to the manifest wish and intention of the persons belonging to the house—a yellow sickly-looking man, with a cloth bound about his head, and a very pretty young woman, though of questionable demeanour, who passed for his niece—to remain throughout the whole night in the same room, with all their goods and arms collected around them. Here they were kept in a state of great dis-

comfort, to use no stronger an expression; more than twice hearing their door attempted, which they had made fast within; and having the best reasons to believe, that some men of whom they saw nothing at supper, had been introduced into the house since they fortified themselves in Mr. Walters's apartment.

A good deal, really, might have been made (in more skilful hands) of this evening at Fuencaliente; what with their hopes, suspicions, consultations, misgivings, and at one moment despair—on the master's side at least. But since nothing came of it, and as, in truth, the incident bore considerable resemblance to one mentioned by Smollett, as well as to various others recounted in romances which we have read, and to many more doubtless, in those which we have not; the subject seems to require no farther notice. Neither will it be expedient to dwell, at any length, upon the passage of our worthies from Alicant to Cornwall.

Whenever Walters enjoyed an interval

from sickness, which very seldom happened during the voyage, he moralized, we will presume, as others have done in similar situations. Perhaps his heart swelled with a sense of grandeur when he beheld the boundless expanse of sky and ocean—perhaps he thought how many or how few planks interposed between himself and destruction: however, all we know is, that he was miserably sick; and as to his thoughts, there appears reason to suppose that he chiefly reflected upon the line of conduct which it would be necessary for him to adopt in England; from whence he had received no direct communication for upwards of four years; and whither he never, probably, would have ventured again, but that he had some property left in an agent's hands in London, which he wanted to get into his own possession. For his resources on the continent were now so nearly exhausted, that, although his purse was reasonably furnished for the present; when that stock should be gone, he would not have known where to turn for more. He escaped

all perils from French cruisers and privateers, and the still greater perils of a leaky vessel, inexperienced crew, and stupid obstinate captain; and having landed in the West of England, paid for his passage, and repossessed himself of his goods from the custom-house, Mr. Walters made himself as comfortable as he could, externally; and sat down in a little inn parlour to consider of his prospects.

"Once more," said he to himself, "am I in my native country— ay, my native land. Fine sounds! which produce a mighty sensation in the breasts of some—an effusion of vapouring and conceit from the mouths of others—and affect me with feelings of unmingled melancholy. Would I had completed the business that brings me over, and were well out of England again! but something whispers—it will never be: and what's worst of all, I am weak enough to be quite disheartened by the foreboding—I'm the slave of imagination——" Here his attention was called off by the voice of his own servant, wrangling with one of the

hostlers in the inn-yard. "That good-for-nothing vagabond, too," continued Mr. Walters, musing, "I may soon wish to get rid of HIM. Indifferent policy, I fear, the having ever taken that fellow into my service: but difficulties at the time seemed to require it; and, as usual, the inconveniences of the moment had more than their due weight with me. No matter: I've a tighter grasp upon him, while we go on together, than his honesty could have furnished—or even his interest, according to the common acceptation of that term. The dog 's a deserter—his life may be said to depend upon his behaviour to me,—and that 's sufficient, I flatter myself, for the securing Master Daniel Draggett. A devilish difference in the climate here! I feel that already:" he got up and stirred the fire. "This is the land of steaks, chops, and coal fires. What an infernal time they are with one's dinner!" His last observation was succeeded by a hearty tug at the bell-rope; and a waiter made his appearance, to light the candles and lay the cloth. No

sooner were the features of this man's countenance visible, than Mr. Walters, who had raised himself in his chair to address him, broke off, after imperfectly pronouncing the first word,—and contemplated him with jealousy and uneasiness.

"Did you speak, Sir?" said the waiter.

Walters turned his chair about, as if unwilling to be gazed at in his turn; and, with great steadiness, perused a newspaper at least a week old, till the other left him. His dinner was now brought in by the landlord in person; but the same waiter attended afterwards; and, from time to time, Walters cast a scrutinizing glance, in order to see whether the man was watching him. He had some suspicion; but, upon the whole, felt relieved by his observations: and at length, emboldened by the refreshment which he had taken, he first risked a question or two, and by degrees opened a conversation. "I am to understand, then, that you have lived all your days in the West here."

"Oh no, Sir," said the waiter: "it's

going for six months only, since I come to this place. Father's a fisherman, at a town they call Crowtonglass, all up to the northwardmore; and he's got four sons of us divided about, as wide apart from one another as any thing ever was in the world. The eldest, he's in sarvice, at Milford Haven, in Wales; the second's along with a tailor, at Leith; I'm settled here, near the Land's End, you see, Sir; and we only want to get the t'other employed somehow, up at Johnny Groat's house (as father talks now and then), to have all of us 'stablished, far enough out of his way, in every part of the island."

Mr. Walters, perceiving that he certainly retained no recollection of him—was well satisfied to let the young man run on, and pleased to find that he prattled so freely: indeed, he now began to reckon the chance a lucky one, which had introduced him thus early to an individual whom he well remembered, with all his connexions; and from whom he hoped to obtain important information. "Crowtonglass!" said

he, "was that the name? Did you say, you belonged to Crowtonglass?"

"Yes sure, Sir," replied the waiter; "like enough, you know the place yourself."

"I may have been there, towards thirty years ago; for about that time, I was on a visit in the neighbourhood of the town. A family of Cothelstons, or some such name, lived near Crowtonglass, in those days."

"No doubt on't, Sir; Squire Cothelston: he lives there still,—at Peterstow Park."

"The very place," said Walters; "it had slipped my memory. Mr. Cothelston, I think, was one of your great squires thereabouts?"

"No—not much of that: we did n't reckon him no great things——kept no hounds, nor nothing. Sir Poole was the man for our money—he, as was killed in Spain, poor fellow!"

"But the Mr. Cothelston whom we were talking of," said Mr. Walters, interrupting

a funeral oration upon Sir Poole Preston, "had a sister, had n't he? I seem to have some recollection of her—a married lady?"

"Mr. Cothelston," replied the waiter, "had two sisters: but the youngest of 'em never was married at all. You're thinking about Madam Mac-Eure: ay, a rare vi'lent one was she! proud, and wilful, and—what not: she hadn't the good word of many among us. But let her be as bad as she would—and I'll uphold it, she was fitter to die nor the child of a day old, in compar'son of that accursed villain as broke her heart—so they all say." Mr. Walters rose hastily from the table, and stood before the grate, with his face towards it. "Shall I make up the fire a bit, Sir?" said the waiter.

"Dead!" cried Walters; "is Mrs. Mac-Eure dead—say ye?"

"Laud, Sir! she died so long as four or five years ago—I can't purcisely say which: but if you'd got time and patience to hear the whole story—I could tell you as cur'ous a one, faith!—as any you'll read in them

there books with a blue cover to 'em. Madam Mac-Eure, you see, had long been a complaining and ailing, poorly, you know —but they thought she might have weathered it all; when—slap, like a thunderbolt—without the least warning in the face of the earth, comes out the hellishest black piece o' bus'ness that ever was heard on, in my time: all along of one Holtofte as was took up and tried for his life—— My stars, Sir! what a knock you have hit your head again the chimley-piece! Does your nose bleed?" Walters made signs that it did—held his hand to his face—and rushed from the room. The waiter, conceiving that he had gone up into a bedchamber, put the table to rights, brought in the cheese, and expected the other to come back; but he long stayed there in vain; and supposing him, at length, to have been seriously ill, he summoned the chambermaid, and sent her to offer her services in the room above. Mr. Walters, however, was not to be found all over the inn, either by waiter or chambermaid; and on missing his hat from the

parlour when they returned, they concluded to their astonishment, that he had been in the room again, while they were away, and had since taken a walk out of the house, though the night was as cold and as dark as any they had known that season.

The clock struck nine, ten, and eleven—but no Mr. Walters: and his Crowtonglass friend began to entertain a notion, that he might have had his reasons for running off from the town entirely; when the gentleman came in, as composedly as if he had only returned from an ordinary stroll—wet through, nevertheless, splashed from head to foot, and soiled with dirt. He ordered his servant to be sent for without delay. Daniel happened to be in bed; though not so drunk but that he could get up again and attend his master; who apprised him, that he was to set out for London next morning, on a four o'clock coach, for which he must instantly make the necessary preparations: while he himself would follow by a later, in the course of the day. He added some directions as to where they

should meet in London—gave him money for the journey—and then went up to his own bed; having resisted a most urgent inclination to examine the waiter further, respecting the events that had occurred near Peterstow while he was abroad, from fear of an eclaircissement, which the abrupt intelligence of Mrs. Mac-Eure's death had nearly brought on already, by exciting such emotions as, with all his caution and finesse, he was unable to control.

CHAPTER XIV.

With the travels of Mr. Draggett towards the metropolis, we have little or nothing to do. Whenever he passed through a place where any soldiers were to be seen, he became quiet and unobtrusive; complaining, if he spoke at all, of head-ache, tooth-ache, swelled face, or some ailment which seemed to warrant him in covering or withdrawing his countenance from much observation.

At other times, he favoured his companions pretty liberally with his ideas on men and manners, both foreign and domestic; adding as many lies about the proceedings in Spain and Portugal, as gained him the reputation of a pleasant intelligent man.

Mr. Walters, on the other hand, was far less communicative to his fellow-travel-

lers. Fastidious by nature, and disposed, had his situation and success in life encouraged him, to have been sufficiently insolent —he had derived, under all circumstances, but little amusement from any topics that he ever heard discussed in a stage-coach, even at times when his mind was far more at ease than at present. In order to dwell therefore without restraint upon his own meditations, he had provided himself with a volume of poetry, "The Siege, or Fall, of something, with other effusions," which he pretended to study most diligently; nor did he take any part in the conversation of the others, till they were within two stages of the capital: when a dispute arose, between a Jew, as appeared by his complexion, features, beard, and admissions,—and a young gentleman in a white-ish great coat, and exceedingly smart travelling cap; who, as Walters soon perceived, was, or intended to be, no less a man of sound head and ready faculties, fit for every sort of society, and with something to say upon every subject,—than a man of pleasure and the

world. The debate turned upon the restoration of Israel: for the literal sense of which, the Hebrew contended; while the buck-about-town argued for a figurative meaning; insisting, that the splendid passages which apparently describe that event, in Isaiah and Ezekiel, relate to some future triumph destined for our church; of which —by virtue of his birth in a Christian country, and consequent baptism—he seemed to suppose himself a member.

Now whether the heart of Mr. Walters grew lighter as his journey approached its termination, or that he was so much diverted by the course of this argument (for nobody had a quicker sense of the ridiculous) as to be taken for a while out of himself and his troubles—he did certainly attend to what was said; and not only attended, but threw in little bye strokes of his own, always leaning to the side of the Jew; although, as they managed the controversy, the latter was far from having the worst of it, before.

With such aid the Israelite cut down

his antagonist, and, as it were, check-mated him perpetually and provokingly, reducing him, before long, to the flippant observation, that the obstinacy of a Jew was proverbial: after which the young gentleman threw himself back in the corner of the coach, looked at the other passengers as if he pitied, rather than disliked them; and hummed, in so masterly a style, a passage (and no easy one either, by any means) from the finale of a comic opera—as must have convinced any one who could form a judgment of his talent, that, whatever he understood about the prophecies, he had heard a great deal of good music, and had an exceedingly delicate ear. Without trouble or difficulty Walters rejoined his servant in London, took a lodging in a small shabby street, near Leicester Fields, and remained at home two entire days together, to meditate upon his plans, before he would venture to call on the agent with whom he had left some property, which he was now in quest of: the fact being, that, in order to recover the same, it was absolutely necessary for

him to apply in person, to a man who knew him perfectly, when he had the most cogent reasons for wishing to preserve his incognito. Here, therefore, was his dilemma: he wanted his money excessively; but in the same degree disliked revealing himself to the agent in whose hands it lay, or ought to have lain: yet, as the man's interest had formerly been promoted by him, Mr. Walters hoped he would prove grateful; and on the fifteenth of January 1810, he set out for his house—though not at that time aware how completely his own fate might be in the power of the other. He found the gentleman (who, by the by, had left off business) at home; and the interview, upon the whole, proved satisfactory: without doubt, considerable astonishment was manifested at first sight of Mr. Walters, and the latter feared, something of displeasure; but people's exclamations of surprise do so frequently resemble those arising from pain or displeasure, that he was willing to conclude himself mistaken, particularly when the former man of business assumed a tone

of respect and civility, acknowledged the claim upon him, and offered to accommodate Walters with any smaller sum for the present, promising him the whole that was due, in less than half a year. This delay did not remarkably suit Mr. Walters, but he had hardly expected to receive his money all at once; and as the other's demeanour was highly gratifying to him, not to mention that he obtained the immediate accommodation of fifty or sixty pounds, of which he stood much in need; he began to feel tolerably content with the turn that affairs were taking.

Gradually and guardedly Walters led the conversation to Peterstow, Crowtonglass, Westerwolde, and the places where they had first known each other—wishing, apparently, to find out how deeply his reputation had sunk in that quarter, since his disgrace and departure, or rather expulsion, from the country—which event has been treated of before, in the course of this narrative.

Upon those subjects, however, but scanty

information could be collected from his agent, Mr. Darley. He had left that part of the world a long time (he said), and quite lost sight of all his early associates: nevertheless, he confirmed the account of Mrs. Mac-Eure's death, and mentioned her daughter's marriage; adding, that their old acquaintance, Richard Holtofte, had got into some scrape, as he understood; but that he never knew the end of it, or even whether Holtofte were now alive.

"I hope not, with all my heart and soul!" said Mr. Walters to himself, as he walked away up St. Martin's Lane. "There's a chance, yet, by heavens, of every thing working right again! Close though—that fellow Darley. I cannot but think, he might have told one more about Holtofte—ay, and given me more particulars of HER death, poor, weak, unhappy thing! if he had pleased."

Walters made a better dinner that day than he had done since he came to London; and not knowing what to do with himself in the evening, he went to the play; saw

a piece, called "The Free Knights; or, the Edict of Charlemagne," which was new at that period, but had not, we believe, a very long run; and "Harlequin Pedlar; or, the Haunted Well:" neither of which performances gave him any very exquisite delight. But it was a satisfaction, that nobody claimed acquaintance with him, or appeared to notice him in the least: and, as day after day rolled on, till he had been a fortnight in town, quiet and unmolested, he either gave Mr. Darley credit for being a man of strict fidelity, or, what was a no less pleasing reflection, fancied that nothing of a serious description had ever come out against himself during his long sojourn upon the continent.

Mr. Walters now walked about the streets more boldly, went to see sights, and to evening amusements, and frequently called upon his agent, with whose manners he always found reason to be satisfied—except in one instance. Mr. Darley asked him to dinner, with the assurance, as the other thought significantly expressed, that

not a soul should be there besides themselves. This intimation roused Walters's jealousy; and he asked, with pretended carelessness, but visible anxiety and suspicion, why he should be supposed averse to meeting any friend of Mr. Darley? a question which the latter evaded, though he got rid of it but awkwardly. The dinner took place however, and they sat down tête-à-tête, after all; neither did Walters, even with the aid of a quart of fiery Port wine, venture to sift his companion further upon the subject that had excited his former uneasiness—while his entertainer as cautiously abstained from uttering one word in allusion to it, from the beginning to the end of the evening. This banquet turned out a heavy affair; Mr. Walters talked much, and licentiously, but never gaily; and drank deep, which muddled him, but did not inspirit him. Between ten and eleven he took his departure; and as he trudged heavily homeward, in a dark, raw, drizzling night, he repeatedly sighed with a presentiment of misfortune. His man Daniel opened the door to him.

"Follow me into my room, where I'll be bound you have let the fire out; and give me a light," said Walters; "after that you may get to bed as soon as you please."

"Sir, a gentleman's been here, inquiring after you, since you been away," observed Daniel, while he was lighting the candle. An exclamation, which might have been called peevish, but which savoured of a far deeper feeling than peevishness, burst from his master.

"For me?" he cried. "Asking for me?"

"A gentleman, I said," returned Draggett; "but mind, I don't answer for his quality."

"Some mistake beyond a doubt," said Walters, with a look which seemed to convey supplication that his servant would confirm him in that notion.

"No, no," rejoined Daniel; "there could n't be no mistake, because he asked for ye first of all by another name. 'No such person lives here,' says I. 'Indeed?' says he. 'What then is your master's name, my friend?' 'Mr. Walters,' says I. 'Ay, true,' says he; and he looked pleased

to be reminded on't. 'I had forgot it at that moment,' says he; and when he found you was n't at home—— "

"Tell me the name that he asked for me by," said Mr. Walters, grasping him by the coat and holding him fast. Daniel scarcely appeared to comprehend what was wanted.

"The first name, I mean," repeated the other, "that he inquired for me by."

"The first! Oh, stay, Sir; oh the plague—— stop a moment—— "

"Should you know it if you heard it?" said Walters.

"Likely enough I might—— yes, I think I should."

"Was it Hancox?"

"No, Sir."

"Was it Rawlinson?"

"No."

"Was it Alderstoke?"

"That's the name, I'll take my oath."

"Then, Daniel, you will step into Piccadilly this instant, and order a chaise to the door here, as soon as ever it can be got ready."

The man stared.

"I am suddenly obliged to go out of town for a month," added Mr. Walters, "and shall leave you here, on board wages, to secure the lodging against my return."

Daniel still appeared astonished.

"Look sharp! look sharp!" cried his master. "I must be packing up, while you run out after the horses."

"A chaise to—where, Sir?" said Draggett.

"To Barnet," replied the other: "I am going into Nottinghamshire."

No mighty packing was necessary on this occasion; for, as Mr. Walters had long contemplated the probability of a journey at a minute's warning, from day to day—he always kept his trunks in readiness, his moveables within them, his cash at hand, and his keys in his pocket. When Daniel Draggett had left the house, therefore, his master had little to do, but to pull forth his luggage into the hall, call up his landlord, and satisfy him with such a liberality, as left a favourable impression upon the

mind of the latter, and disposed him to shun all incivility in the form of inquisitiveness: then, after intimating, or rather promising (which was the shorter method of the two), that he would come back again in about a month, and re-occupy the same rooms; he made up the fire, and sat waiting for the chaise, with his elbows on the table, and his face resting upon both his hands.

"That man Darley has betrayed me," said he to himself, "for which I ought to have been better prepared; but I must have come over to England or starved; and since he has acknowledged the debt and paid me part of the money, I will still risk something to get the rest, and then bid adieu to this country for ever. Risk! there's no risk. What harm can he or any body else do me, in the event of their tracing me out? which, by the way, I will take good care they shall not so easily do, or so much as hear of me again till my time and means are matured. But one individual could really be formidable to me—how he could injure me, with safety to himself, one

does not discover—and there is yet a chance that he may not be living, though the alarm of to-night makes me fear the contrary, I must confess. We shall see, master Darley, which of us will outwit the other."

Daniel now returned with information, that the chaise was coming up; and received by way of wages during his master's absence, such a sum, as he bowed to the ground for, in the parlour; and winked his eye at, with a grin of shrewdness and derision, when on the other side of the door. Mr. Walters soon came out to see his trunk tied on.

"I wish your honour a pleasant journey," said Draggett. "Where am I to direct t'ye, Sir, if there's any letters to be forwarded?"

"Mrs. Chandler's, Newark," replied his master: "however, all letters may remain here till I come back to town; and if I have any particular orders to give, I can write to you."

"Good bye t'ye, Sir."

"Good bye, Daniel. Stay: I was think-

ing of something just now. Ah,—did the person who was here this evening say he should call again to-morrow?"

"No, Sir—said nothing about calling any more."

"Hum—what sort of a looking man? tall?"

"About my height, perhaps; but more powerfuller round the chest—hasn't no great objection to's glass neither, by the colour of the face of him."

Sick to the heart, at this corroboration of his direst apprehensions, and loathing his own servant's offensive familiarity, Mr. Walters muttered the detested name of Holtofte; took shelter in the chaise, nestled, as snugly as he could, in one corner, drew up every glass, and the bottom of the vehicle being well stuffed with straw and sufficiently warm, he was relieved from his present distressing thoughts by a sound nap; nor did he wake again to sad reality, till his postboy turned into the inn-yard at Barnet.

CHAPTER XV.

From Barnet, his first stage, Mr. Walters proceeded to put in practice the commonest of all tricks among swindlers, fraudulent debtors, and shufflers of every description. Instead of pursuing the road to Newark, which he had named as the place of his intended residence, he struck across the country to the westward, and established his quarters at an obscure village on the borders of North Wales, which, for reasons that need not here be entered upon, we shall call St. Orsythe.

Many other spots might have been chosen, to the full as retired, but Walters had his motives for preferring this village; and such motives they were, as will at once be reckoned incredible and unnatural, by those who are not habitually aware of the

perpetual strange inconsistencies of the human mind; it being no less true than extraordinary, that this man, whose whole life had been spent in contrivances, and often by foul means, to carry some worldly end—who had no hope beyond this world—and who professed not to know a term of disdain adequate to express his contempt of all sentiment and romance, entertained, notwithstanding, as strongly affectionate a feeling for the scenes of his infancy, as Gray probably, or Shenstone, or Beattie, or the most pensive bard that ever sang of "sad vicissitude." Under the influence of such feelings, he determined, since he must live somewhere in the strictest privacy till he should find or create an opportunity of recovering his money;—after which, he meant to bid adieu to his native country for ever;—to reside at St. Orsythe, where he had been put to his first school, at scarcely seven years of age; and where, in comparative innocence, and, as things seemed on the retrospect, perfect

happiness, he had passed between five and six years of his early life.

The house was yet standing, but had ceased, for many years, to be used as a school: a person of the name of Gwinnell now inhabited it: a gentleman, who had originally belonged to a profession by which he lost money continually, while his friends as steadily predicted, that, in the long run, he must and would succeed. In process of time however, by the death of some collateral relation, he became possessed of a moderate fortune, purchased this house at St. Orsythe, married a most estimable young woman—and exceedingly pretty withal, and by her had a fine family of five daughters; the eldest of whom was but a child of twelve or thirteen, when Mr. Walters came into their neighbourhood, and took up his abode in a cottage upon the heath, not half a mile distant from the mansion which we have been mentioning. For a period of thirty-six years, at the very least, Mr. Walters had never spent a week together under such circumstances as he

was placed in just now; in profound solitude, and uninterrupted quiet, in a lovely country, combining the features of grandeur and luxuriance; meeting nobody but the civil inoffensive peasants of the vicinity, and speaking to nobody, but the old man and his wife belonging to the cottage which he had hired, who occupied one room there, went on his errands, and provided his meals for him. With regard to his own figure and deportment, he had contemplated the probable necessity of some change in his personal appearance, before his retreat from London; and had prepared more than one portmanteau for any expedition that might be requisite, with the express view of having a variety of clothes by him, to be adapted to whatever transformation he might determine upon. No sooner, therefore, was he fairly settled at St. Orsythe, than he made his début in a full suit of black, of a foreign make, somewhat the worse for wear, and the cut of which accorded but badly with the then reigning mode of dress. This attire, aided

by a hat looped up at the side, gave him the look of a decent but old-fashioned clergyman, a character which his age well suited, and which the title of "reverend" assumed by him for the first time, in this retirement, served sufficiently to confirm. Mr. Walters, in his resolution of secreting himself at this spot, had, without deeply considering the nature of his inclinations, certainly been influenced by an expectation of pleasure in retracing the scenes of his youth, unsuspected and unnoticed. Nor can it be said that he met with a total disappointment; the recollections and ideas excited by the place, were at all times vivid, and at first, highly gratifying; but he soon discovered, that the gratification would not last, and though the interest awakened by such reflections never failed to be intense, that they produced, in a little while, any thing but pleasure. The innocent amusements, the gaiety of heart, the venial faults of those days, were contrasted with his subsequently deplorable manhood, and his spirits left him entirely. Still there

was a fascination about the old haunts,— and one evening, when, in order to avoid a noisy company of the villagers who were approaching him, he quitted the lane, and crossed a fallow field of several acres in extent, he recollected, that in the very same path, more than forty years ago, at the time the field was covered with ripe barley, he and two other boys, by way of a frolic, had tied the corn across; and afterwards waited under a clump of trees (which he had at that moment in his view) to see who would be first caught in their trap. The victim happened to be the little daughter of a gruff churlish labourer, with a larger family than he was well able to support. The child came singing and tripping along the path, with a jug of milk upon her head, the main article probably, which their whole household could reckon upon, for that night's supper. On arriving at the spot, however, where these lads had made a knot of the corn across the path, her mirth was suddenly converted into sad weeping and wailing; down she rolled, smash went the

jug; and Walters full well remembered, that although he laughed heartily with his mischievous companions, at the instant—he had felt very differently when he thought their prank over, in bed at night. Odd as it may seem, the idea of this poor little maid's distress recurred as fresh to his mind this evening, as if the thing had but just happened; it affected him with the most acute grief; and considering, perhaps, this idle piece of sport as the commencement of a course of life, unproductive of good to any of his fellow-creatures, injurious to many, and (with exception of some intervals devoted to mere animal enjoyment) wretched to himself; he strolled on towards the meadows with a languid step, drooping downcast look, and heavy heart; sat on the ground under one of the trees, and, old as he was, shed tears in abundance, of bitter hopeless anguish. In a short time after this evening, solitude became insupportable to Mr. Walters; he had been used to society, and, till now, never had discovered how indispensable some intercourse with other people was

to his comfort: but the mere exchange of a sentence now and then with the cottagers in his house, or the countrymen whom he met in his rambles, afforded no resource whatever. He had no books, he had no in-door occupation; and, after turning out upon the heath for about an hour in the morning, when the freshness of the air and increasing charms of the season gave him a temporary relish of his existence; all the remainder of each day was consigned to anticipation of evil, and fits of the blackest melancholy. He became fanciful, nervous, and suspicious; he took it into his head that he was watched, that people were hired to follow him about; and on one occasion, he returned home in such an agony, as really alarmed the old man and woman who lived with him; because, when he passed two boys in the wood by Mr. Gwinnell's, one had observed to the other, "if that man ben't talking to's own self, Tom, he be talking to the devil."

In expectation of some relief from his internal misery, our adventurer now laid

out for an acquaintance with the family of Mr. Gwinnell, the gentleman, who, as has been adverted to already, resided in what was formerly the school-house; and in order to bring it about, he took kind notice of his little daughters whenever he fell in with them—first smiling, as if he had vast pleasure in contemplating the group—next asking questions about them of the nurses—and soon proceeding to speak, in a playful manner, to one or other of them: so that he was talked of, when they got home, both by nurse and children, as the nicest good-tempered gentleman that could possibly be. Nor was Mr. Walters so utter a hypocrite in all this, as many might suppose; he did admire the children certainly, and their prattle amused and pleased him; for, by nature, he had affectionate feelings, and much sensibility: nobody was more easily excited to those emotions which mankind are apt to admire as proofs of a sensitive heart; nobody more visibly moved by a tragedy or an affecting story; but his principles were false and his mind corrupt.

Because religion thwarted his immediate wishes, because the scheme of Christianity, on a superficial view, was unattractive to him, he had rejected the Gospel himself, and he opposed it in others; he called himself a Deist indeed, but lived without any sense of God as the governor of the world, and had been given over to selfishness. Nothing influenced him but the opinions of men: when he could baffle them, therefore, he was fettered by no restraint: and, as his wants increased, and his delicacy lessened, the question came solely to be, not "What will my fellow-creatures think of my conduct if I do so and so?" but, "Is it likely that any one of them can hurt me for indulging my wishes?"

Few of Walters's objects in life had been attained so easily, as was the introduction he now sought to Mr. Gwinnell: that open-hearted, hospitable man, had already inquired much about him; and on hearing of his mild manners and inoffensive deportment (for such was the character given, and given with justice, of Mr.

Walters in his present retreat), the former gentleman only wanted a pretence for asking him to his house, which the intimacy struck up between Walters and his children, soon sufficiently afforded. Consequently, Mr. Gwinnell waited upon him at his cottage; was received with the unaffectedly engaging address which the other so well knew how to assume; and felt convinced before he went away, that he had not only performed a duty in making these friendly overtures, but that he should secure to himself a plentiful additional source of gratification, in the society of his neighbour. The visit being duly returned, a speedy invitation to dinner ensued, and was followed by many more. Mr. Walters liked Mrs. Gwinnell as well as he did her husband; he was pleased with all the habits of the family; he borrowed from them books of amusement, books of science, and whatever helped to lighten the load of time at his own habitation; and made himself so agreeable in requital of these civilities, that before long he became almost domesticated with them: Mr. Gwinnell

being, in truth, the better disposed towards his new acquaintance, because he was not in circumstances, as he frankly owned, to entertain them in his turn. But from the harassed mind of Walters, though he was now less constantly wretched than during the first period of his sojourn at St. Orsythe, comfort and calmness were still remote: occasionally, indeed, he experienced soothing sensations in the company of this family, and would acknowledge, even to his own internal feelings, a gleam of something like tranquillity, while engaged in playing with the children, entering into their little histories, or giving them any instruction that lay in his power. Far oftener, however, he left the happy circle with a breaking heart. He had no children, nor ever was likely to have any; he was the last of his race, and had not a relative or friend upon earth. Then, he would lie down, to moan through many sleepless hours of the night, over blessings neglected and spurned, an excellent understanding perverted, and a corroding sense of guilt,

from which he clearly perceived that he never could deliver himself by his own efforts, and for which he had rejected, and obstinately continued to reject, the only atonement. Things went on in this state till the first of May, which was not only a sort of festival throughout the neighbourhood, but an occasion of still further hilarity in Mr. Gwinnell's house, by being the birthday of his second daughter. The children, therefore, were to have an universal holyday, to order their own dinner, to enjoy a kind of rural fête after it, and, by way of crowning the whole festivity, to invite their friend Mr. Walters, with a card written by themselves, and in the name of the queen of the day. Mr. Gwinnell, an early riser, undertook to carry over the invitation to the cottage before breakfast; but when he came there, Walters proved to be out upon his rambles; having previously informed the old woman of the house, that he should breakfast at a village three or four miles off, and not come back till noon; when, as he had already been apprized (though the

ceremony of the children's card was yet wanting), the amusements were to begin, in honour of Miss Marianne's birthday.

Satisfied with the intelligence that their guest would return in time, Mr. Gwinnell prolonged his walk entirely round the heath, and approached a public-house that stood at the entrance of a lane communicating with his own grounds, just as a post-chaise drew up to the door, from which alighted three men; two of whom went directly into the alehouse, while the third sauntered about the common, and appeared to be making observations upon the lay of the country. Mr. Gwinnell was necessarily obliged to pass this person in his way home, and thought as he came near him, that in the course of his life he never had seen a firmer built man. The stranger in these parts—for such he seemed to be by his manner of staring about him—was dressed like a yeoman or reputable tradesman, and had by no means an unpleasing character of countenance; so, at least, Mr. Gwinnell was of opinion, as he went by; and from

that time, he probably would have thought of him no more, had not the latter moved forward with the manifest intention of addressing him; upon which the gentleman stood still, and with his usual courtesy, waited to hear what he had to say.

"Be good enough, Sir," observed the stranger, with rather an important air, though far from an uncivil one, "to tell me whose house that is, on the left of the lane there, beyond those trees."

"Mr. Gwinnell's, at your service."

"I ask your pardon, Sir; then you are the owner of it, I suppose?" Mr. Gwinnell bowed.

"Hope I'm not troublesome, Sir; and don't you fancy that I ask these questions just merely out of my own curiosity; for it's a matter of duty that brings me down here. Who, pray, lives at the cottage right over against us, upon the common?"

"An old man and his wife, of the name of Price."

"Hem! of what condition in life?"

"Poor people: he was a hard-working

man, while he could work at all; but now he helps things on by letting out part of his house, whenever he can find a lodger; and he has let his best rooms for these two months and more, to a Mr. Walters."

"Oh, Mr. Walters! oh—I thank you, Sir. Mr. Walters is a gentleman, then?"

"Sir, Mr. Walters is a clergyman," replied Gwinnell; "and if you have any business with him, I can tell you that he's not at home at present, nor will be, till the middle of the day."

"Thank you kindly, Sir," said the man; and taking a printed paper out of his waistcoat pocket, he turned away to read it; while Mr. Gwinnell walked on, resolving to tell Walters what had just occurred; but, after the children's fête began, the whole business went out of his head.

Between one and two, Mr. Walters arrived: by which time the sports had made some progress. His fore-finger was instantly seized by the little queen of the festival, and she led him forth in triumph to the lawn, where stood a small tent in

which the collation was spread. By the side of it, they had erected a may-pole, in conformity with a picture in one of their father's old books; round which pole, in the costume of morrice-dancers (the work of an entire week before), made up as accurately as Mr. Gwinnell's antiquarian lore, and the united skill of all the females of the house at their needle could contrive, danced this joyous band, accompanied by other recruits, consisting of children about the same ages, from the village.

Meanwhile the parents, not the least happy of the party, directed their immediate operations; and the whole was admired and applauded to their heart's content, by the servants assembled in a body, as spectators, at the house-door.

For a certain time, Mr. Walters, bewitched by the gaiety and innocence of every thing around him, almost succeeded in forgetting that there was such a being upon earth as himself: with unfeigned pleasure and truth, he congratulated Mrs. Gwinnell on her judicious mode of educating her

family, and the address with which she husbanded their amusements, and thus made the few treats and holydays which were celebrated in this manner, produce as much delight, perhaps, as this world is capable of imparting. "The same nurse, I think," said Walters, "lives with you still, who brought up every one of these from their cradle?"

"Indeed she does," replied Mrs. Gwinnel; "and not one of the children, you may depend upon it, has a more thorough enjoyment of this day. Where is Anthony? Where's Mr. Gwinnell? he was talking to her just this minute, a little before the rest of them there, in front of the house:" then, looking towards the group at the hall-door, she seemed struck with something that she had not hitherto observed. "Anthony, my dear," said she to her husband, "who are those men among our servants?"

His eyes, as well as those of Mr. Walters, were directed that way at the same instant; upon which, one of the strangers shrunk back within the house: and, as

Walters caught hold of Mr. Gwinnell's arm, the latter perceived him to be trembling excessively. "Does any thing ail you?" said he: "how's this, my good Sir? What did you see there? What did you think you saw?" The last question was four times repeated, before Walters made some unintelligible answer; and he looked quite lost and bewildered.

"Are you ill?" said Mrs. Gwinnell.

"Yes," returned Walters, feebly: "I believe I am ruined."

At this moment a man came forward upon the lawn; and Mr. Gwinnell immediately recollected him to be the same person who had spoken to himself, near the public-house, in the morning. Without any roughness or rudeness in his address, there was an expression of determination, an air of authority about this man, which awed, not to say alarmed, the whole company. "Mr. Gwinnell," said he, "I have a very unpleasant service to perform here; but I am acting, Sir, under a proper warrant." He then mentioned a magistrate in a high

situation, whose name could not be unknown in the most remote parts of the kingdom:—"and perhaps this lady, and the young people, might as well be out of the way just now."

"Go in, Ellen, and take the children with you," said Mr. Gwinnell: an injunction which his wife, after some hesitation, obeyed. "Good heaven! my friend! what has thrown you into such an agitation?" added he, turning to Walters: "do you know this person?"

Mr. Walters made no kind of reply; but sat down upon the bench which the children had just quitted.

"I have a warrant," said the officer, "to execute upon one David Alderstoke, otherwise Walters, on a charge of murder." Mr. Gwinnell turned to his guest for some explanation of this scene; and was almost stupified with horror at perceiving that he had fallen from the bench, and lay upon the ground, motionless. "This unfortunate gentleman, I conclude, is my prisoner," said the police officer, raising him from the

grass, in which he was soon assisted by others. "A disagreeable circumstance, Mr. Gwinnell, to take place amongst your family; and I am heartily sorry it has so happened."

"Why, you seem to me," replied Gwinnell, still staring in the profoundest amazement, "to have no certainty as to this gentleman's person, now!"

"We shall soon find out whether I am mistaken, or not," returned the officer; "and you may make yourself sure of this; that before we set off for London, sufficient——"

Here, Alderstoke, after several abortive efforts to speak, at last succeeded. "Did not I see Richard Holtofte standing among you, at the door of the house?"

"You certainly did, Sir," said the other.

"Grant me one request then: I beg and implore you, as the last favour that I shall ever ask of any human being, not to make me travel in company with that man."

"'Twas never intended you should, Sir; but he must come forward and prove you to be the person described in the warrant."

"For mercy's sake, keep him out of my sight. I am the individual you speak of; my name is David Alderstoke; and now, take me away to London, or any where, for I'm sick of my life."

They accordingly conveyed this wretched man to the public-house; and within a quarter of an hour afterwards, were proceeding towards London, with him in their custody: leaving poor Mr. Gwinnell and his whole family, as well as many of their quiet honest neighbours, more shocked, distressed, and, for a time, terrified; than they could have conceived it possible for any worldly occurrence, in the course of that day, to render them.

CHAPTER XVI.

On the ninth of this same month of May, Mr. Cothelston (for the course of events has once more led us to Peterstow) happened to be at home when the post came in; he was sitting in his study, with his son-in-law, Mr. Ullesbey, talking about a mortgage in which the latter thought of investing part of his property. Rupert was speaking, but stopped upon a letter being delivered to the Squire; and while he opened and perused it, Ullesbey, in his own defence, took up the newspaper. Almost at the same instant, they both made a great outcry, got up from their chairs, and approached each other, full of the same piece of intelligence.

"This event will produce a sensation all over the county, and perhaps all over the north of England," said Rupert.

"Heaven help us!" cried the Squire: "will there be time to break it to my dear Mary, before they get their paper? I would not, for the creation, that she should first learn such news from the public prints, in her present state."

"Hadn't I better ride over directly, Sir?" said Ullesbey.

"Ay, do, there's a good fellow—that is to say—no, I will go myself. But I wish you would wait here, and see Major Carruthers; he was to call between three and four you know, with the Newfoundland puppy."

So saying, Mr. Cothelston seized his hat and whip, hastened out to the stables, galloped nearly every step of the way to Major Carruthers' house, and, with a bustling air, and sense of importance that gave him a secret satisfaction, though he looked as if he bore the tidings of the incipient dissolution of the universe; he inquired whether the newspaper of that day had arrived yet; expressed the greatest relief on hearing to the contrary, warned

the servants, for their lives, not to show it to their mistress when it should come; and then went in and opened his intelligence to Mrs. Bentley Carruthers.

Mary bore the news without injury; for which, she was more indebted, probably, to her habitual calmness and self-command, than to any remarkable address of her uncle in telling the story: her agitation, however, was far from inconsiderable, and occasioned so many breaks and repetitions in the narrative, that we prefer collecting the facts from the conversation between Major Carruthers and Rupert Ullesbey; the former having kept his appointment at Peterstow, and brought with him the puppy, intended as a present either to Mrs. Ullesbey or her sister Clara, we never heard which of the two. Rupert had long been watching for him, with sufficient impatience, and met him as soon as he set foot within the house.

"Did you call any where else, Carruthers," said Rupert, "before you came here?"

"Not at any gentleman's house, if you

mean that," returned the other. "Look, d'ye see? Here's the puppy. Isn't he a fine fellow? he'll be as big as a full-grown bear, before Christmas, eighteen hundred and eleven."

"Never mind the dog," said Ullesbey; "have you seen to-day's paper?"

"How could I? We don't get ours sooner than four o'clock; and ever since half past one—— "

"I know, I know," cried Rupert hastily; "just come in here then: I've something very particular to tell you."

He shut the door, and taking Major Carruthers by the arm, walked him up and down the room.

"You mean to return straight home from hence?" said Ullesbey.

"I had not intended it," replied Carruthers: "go on, however, with what you have to say."

"You should see Mrs. Carruthers without delay; 'twould be no harm if you were with her now, indeed; for all the distressing story of her father's death will again be

brought forward. They've got hold of Alderstoke, Sir. They have, by heaven and earth!"

"I am very sorry to hear it," said Bentley; "'t will be a dreadful shock to Mary, and I had hoped the wretch might have been longer spared, for the chance of his repentance. Let me go home to her, then, this moment."

"There is no necessity for such an extravagant hurry, either," replied Rupert; "and now I recollect, her uncle must be with her by this time, as, immediately upon receiving the news, he rode over, to prevent any body from telling her without sufficient preparation. Alderstoke's apprehension is mentioned in this paper, and I dare say, in all the papers; they laid hold of him, as I learn from Mr. Cothelston's letters, at some village in or near Wales. He had previously been living in London, for a good while, openly, though under a false name, I doubt; and was at last betrayed to Holtofte, by somebody who owed him money; so they say, at least; but taken, he unques-

tionably is, and has been examined at a public office in London, and will be sent down here in a few days, to stand his trial for the murder, in this county."

"The most awful event that I ever had any personal concern in," said Carruthers; "he must have been infatuated to have thought of returning to England at all; and being here, I wonder why he did not contrive to silence the other man."

"Oh! to quiet him would have been no such easy matter," returned Ullesbey. "Holtofte has vowed that he only lived for his destruction, ever since Alderstoke first ran for it, after robbing him of every thing he could carry off—if, indeed, the word robbery can be applied to one villain cheating another out of stolen goods that could belong to neither."

"Really, I must be going back, Ullesbey," said Major Carruthers.

"Very well; perhaps you had better," returned Rupert; "and you now, in a general way, know the worst that can be told."

Before long the ill-fated Alderstoke arrived, in proper custody, and was committed to the county gaol, at a town which we have hitherto called Fynndal, not above twelve miles distant from Mr. Cothelston's house. For the first week of his confinement, he spoke to no persons whatever unless they spoke to him; and then, answered as shortly as possible; but still, with a civility of manner that appeared always to have been natural to him, and to have belonged to his birth and extraction. He only took food in consequence of being pressed to do so, and never seemed to sleep; he was heard, at least, talking to himself, and during most hours of the night. The gaoler, a good, humane man, who having been born and bred up in the county, had yet (notwithstanding the dreadful guilt of which his prisoner was accused) some remains of respectful feeling for him, on account of his ancient and honourable descent—was grieved to see him so utterly hopeless, so apparently reckless of his own state, both as to this world and the next. He was prevented, however,

by particular considerations, from offering Mr. Alderstoke (which he would have liked to do) the use of religious books, or from proposing to introduce a clergyman to him, before trial, while his crime was unsubstantiated; but thought it right, at length, to ask him whether he would wish for the aid of any professional person, in preparing for his defence. Mr. Alderstoke expressed gratitude for his attention, but observed that he had a violent pain in his head, and begged to be left to himself: with which desire, for that time, the gaoler complied. On the following day, he still held it his duty to repeat the application, though with little expectation of being listened to; when the prisoner surprised him exceedingly, by praying earnestly to see Major Carruthers, if that gentleman would deign to visit him, but nobody else; and in such determination he uniformly persisted.

On this demand being intimated to Bentley, it gave him any thing but satisfaction; he conferred with Mr. Cothelston and the Ullesbeys, both husband and wife,

upon the subject, who were unanimously of opinion, that, in his peculiar circumstances, the visit would be productive ef embarrassment and distress beyond question, and probably lead to the greatest inconveniences: that Alderstoke might ask favours which Major Carruthers could not, and ought nòt, to grant; and that, upon the whole, he would be well justified in refusing the request. But this did not quite satisfy Carruthers; he felt uneasy, and adopting the very course, at last, which he had originally resolved against, for fear of agitating Mary—he applied to his own wife for advice. She, however, differed from the people at Peterstow; declaring, that, however painful and repulsive to his inclinations the interview might be, at the earnest solicitation of a man in the prisoner's situation, she thought Bentley was bound by every Christian motive to accede to his wishes; and her husband, as usual, conformed to her judgment. He consequently called at the gaol, and had the gratification of hearing from the governòr, as the head

officer of that establishment was denominated by the lower orders, that, when Mr. Alderstoke was informed of his request having been granted, he had expressed himself, and appeared to be, considerably relieved in mind: that he had, since, occasionally conversed with calmness and connexion, and had become more tractable as to matters recommended to him for his sustenance and general health. Major Carruthers was now led across a wide court, and up a flight of steps, into a gallery which extended entirely round the yard, open to the air on one side, and covered by a pent-house. With this gallery many cells communicated, by small, but immensely thick oaken doors, strengthened by various contrivances, and the locks of each, additionally secured with broad plates of iron. At the fifth of these doors, on the right hand, the gaoler stopped; made his selection from an enormous bunch of keys, and having admitted Bentley, locked him in; observing that he should himself remain at hand, in the

gallery, during the whole interview, and would obey the first knock he might hear upon the door from the inside. Mr. Alderstoke was standing beneath a window, too high to admit of his seeing out of it, but which apparently looked upon another inner court, as part of the opposite wing of the building could be discerned from the floor of the apartment.

"Be so obliging as to sit down, Major Carruthers," said he, in a quiet composed tone enough.

"I had rather not, Sir. I have no intention to remain here long, and should not choose to occupy the only chair in the room."

"Pray do, Mr. Carruthers. We prisoners have plenty of sitting and lying, in the course of the twenty-four hours; and if I should be tired, I can make use of the bed. Now, Sir, be pleased to favour me with your attention; and allow me to observe, that if you shall refuse to hear me through every thing I have to say, you might as well not have had the kindness to come here at all."

"Recollect, Mr. Alderstoke, that I am the husband of the late Mr. Mac-Eure's only child. If the county had not thought proper to prosecute you, I am the person upon whom that duty would have fallen; and I warn you not to talk to me on the subject of the offence with which you are charged: because, should you say one word calculated to strengthen the testimony that we are now possessed of, I must, and undoubtedly shall, give it in evidence against you." Alderstoke feebly smiled; and Bentley, who from motives of delicacy had been careful not to look much at him upon his first entrance, now perceived the mighty alteration which eight years of guilt, anxiety, remorse, and despair, had effected in his person and countenance. He was shrunk to a shadow; his form, very neatly shaped according to his original growth, was bent double, as if he had a broken back; he had no more colour than a corpse; and the features of his face, by nature regular, and even pleasing, were drawn all awry by a paralytic affection, which oc-

casioned, without his being conscious of it, a perpetual convulsive catch of the muscles.

"No man," replied Mr. Alderstoke, "should be reputed guilty, till his guilt has been demonstrated."

"Certainly not," said the other.

"Notwithstanding which," continued Alderstoke, "I plainly perceive that Major Carruthers regards me with an aversion and horror, incapable of being heightened by any possible circumstances."

"Would it not be better, Sir," said Bentley, "since you have procured my attendance here; to come at once to those matters, upon which you were desirous to speak with me?" Mr. Alderstoke paused, and then resumed his discourse, but without directly replying to the last question.

"That respectable, virtuous man, and unimpeachable character, Richard Holtofte, is, I understand, the great witness to be brought forward on this occasion. Now, Major Carruthers, tell me one thing: will he be believed in a court of justice?"

"I wish, Sir, you would not talk in this

way to me, but would apply to some legal adviser. There can be no harm, however, in my telling you, that, as I am informed, a person who has once been tried himself, and acquitted, is an unobjectionable witness against any other, for the same crime of which he was accused."

"That seems strange," said Alderstoke; "for, let him manage his story how he will, by his own showing he must be a villain."

"Sir, I am no lawyer," replied Bentley; "and I must own, that to my mind, what you say doesn't sound unreasonable. But suppose Holtofte to be discredited—the case is a very different one, when his account comes to be confirmed by Waugh." Here Mr. Alderstoke made an exclamation, which seemed to have been extorted by sudden, violent bodily pain; grasped the hair of his head with both hands; and after walking two or three times rapidly across the room, sat down upon the bed.

"Waugh!" he cried; "has Waugh then been brought over from France? Well,

and what if he has? Waugh was not present at his death."

"You have said too much a great deal, Sir," observed Carruthers; "and I shall leave this place immediately." He knocked at the door therefore, as he had been directed to do by the gaoler, but without any effect; for the latter, secure against any improper dealings with his prisoner, on the part of Major Carruthers, and finding that the conference was likely to draw into length, had quitted his station just at this time, and gone below, to look after some other business.

"You see that I am positively compelled to remain here for the present," said Carruthers, after repeated attempts to make himself heard without; "and now, if you will persist in doing yourself an injury by your communications, you must take the consequence; but I advise and beg you to be silent."

"I had already heard," said the other, persevering, "that Waugh was expected: pray, is he actually come? and when did he

come? you will surely tell me that much, which it is most important for me to know?"

"He arrived at Fynndal the night before last." Here, a long silence ensued; and Carruthers hoped they were to talk no more; but just as he was about to make another endeavour to get away, Mr. Alderstoke again addressed him.

"Whatever may be the consequence of death to me—die I must, and upon this accusation. I have made up my mind to die; and will now tell you why I sent for you. I wish to make over a small sum of money, to which I am entitled, to your wife; and thus to disappoint the scoundrel who has betrayed me, that he might embezzle it." He then mentioned the sum due to him from his agent Darley, and produced a written gift of the same to Mrs. Bentley Carruthers; which, however, the Major took upon himself to refuse, with a peremptoriness and decision of manner bordering on indignation.

"Be it so then," cried Alderstoke,

raising his voice; "you loathe and scorn me; nor will you, nor can you, detest me more, when you shall hear from my own mouth, that I am guilty of the murder of your wife's father! I have said it. There is my confession; a voluntary confession, sufficient I conclude to hang me—and now listen quietly to the particulars of the deed." Carruthers kept his eyes fixed upon him, and let him proceed henceforward, without a word of interruption. "James Mac-Eure, Richard Holtofte, and myself," continued Alderstoke, "having collected, under one pretence or another, goods to a great amount, and defrauded the whole neighbourhood, by every contrivance in our power—came to a quarrel; partly about the means of securing and disposing of our booty, and partly about other matters not necessary to be here particularized. Holtofte and I agreed, that Mac-Eure was a perverse intractable man, upon whom no dependence could be placed, and that he must be got rid of; and Richard Holtofte would tell you, that I tempted HIM to the

murder of our associate. Be that as it may, the fact is, that whoever proposed it—he executed it; though well I know, how certainly that devil, if ever there was one, would swear in a court of justice to the contrary. But, which story is the more probable, judge you from a consideration of our two characters. I affirm that Holtofte attacked him suddenly, beat him to the ground, and killed him; while I, who had indeed beguiled Mac-Eure to the destined spot, and agreed to assist—stood by, being afraid to strike a blow. Why do you turn away your head? Is what I say incredible? Have I attempted to palliate my crime? Have I not, in effect, confessed myself equally guilty with the other murderer?"

"You most wretched of mankind," said Carruthers, "I had no desire to contribute, by my testimony, to your fate; but you will compel me to do so. Is your story incredible, do you ask? Very far from incredible to me, I lament to say: nor are your unexplained motives for such wickedness, any concern of mine."

"I understand you," replied the other; "you would insinuate that different motives influenced me, from those which I have admitted, or those which I partook with Holtofte. You have been told, probably, that I wished to marry that unhappy woman, Miss Cothelston, before she accepted Mac-Eure—— "

"May the Almighty bring you to a proper sense of your sins!" cried Bentley in deep emotion: "I'll remain here no longer." He rose, but Alderstoke laid his hand upon him, and endeavoured to stop him.

"You once assured me, Mr. Carruthers, on a former occasion, that your dislike of me, should be no reason against your doing me a service."

"Could I contribute to your soul's welfare, I might be induced to stay," replied Carruthers, hesitating.

"We will talk of that matter hereafter; but, for the present, have patience, and hear me through. You remember a cave

in the woods behind Peterstow park, called by the common people the —— "

"To be sure," cried Bentley, struck on mention of this cave, with a sort of curiosity that was quite uncontrollable; "but you cannot mean to say that the body was buried there, because they searched the very place before Holtofte's trial."

"And they must have found," said the former, "a dry well; the mouth of which had been covered, to the depth of several feet, with stones and earth."

"I believe they did."

"In that well," returned Alderstoke, "were deposited the various articles of plate, with which we affirmed James MacEure to have absconded; they were brought thither, from time to time, always by night, and the service was attended with continual and imminent hazard of ruin to us both. Not more, in my opinion, from the ordinary difficulties of such an undertaking, than from the rashness and violence of that headstrong ruffian, who would rule every thing according to his own pleasure; and

whose insane attempts to terrify the people into a general dread of venturing near the cave, in the night-time, were perpetually exposing us to additional danger. The body of James Mac-Eure we buried beneath the stone floor in Waugh's cottage; but I must add, that Waugh was not privy to our former act, nor—whatever he might have suspected—do I think that he ever saw the face of the corpse."

"Suspected!" cried Major Carruthers, no longer attempting to restrain himself; "he must, necessarily, have known enough to be master of both your lives."

"That, you may believe me, he made us feel; but we paid him for his silence and assistance, in coin, coaxing, and promises without stint; in addition to which, look you — he himself owed Mac-Eure money. If there is a hell, I underwent the beginning of its torments upon this earth, while living in close and compulsory connexion with that odious being, Richard Holtofte; and my chief purpose in making this confession, is to prevent him from recovering, by his way of telling his

own story, the smallest degree of that credit which might tend to set him up in the world again; for, in that case, the life of such a base unfeeling reptile would soon be as easy as he could desire, though he were polluted with all the crimes, and worse, than the foulest imagination, and most furious passions, have ever yet conceived or perpetrated."

"Mr. Alderstoke," said Bentley, "I need not remind you, that your days will very shortly come to an end; and 'twould be lamentable, if you were to use the few that remain, in indulging malignant feelings against any fellow-creature, be his wickedness what it may. Think of your own state, and leave your wretched associate to the dispensation of Providence."

"Why do not you upbraid me," said Alderstoke abruptly, "for being the first of my family that ever stood in the certain situation of being sentenced to be hanged?"

"Because it is not my province to upbraid you at all."

"I remember you a very free liver, Major Carruthers."

"No doubt you do," replied Bentley, though not till a minute after the former remark; "but you must surely allow the possibility of a person's reformation."

"I don't know what to make of it; your conversion or repentance (whichever word you like) seems not to have obstructed your progress in the world much."

"My present blessings, without question," returned Carruthers, "are beyond any deserts of mine — infinitely beyond. But my ease has been, and is liable to be, continually interrupted; and you greatly deceive yourself, if——"

"I beg your pardon," said Alderstoke, stopping him; "I beg your pardon; but I am told, that you make pretensions to be considered as a very devout and serious character."

"I entreat you to be assured," replied Bentley emphatically, laying his hand at the same time upon that of the other, in a manner that showed concern, if not regard for him, "that I do firmly believe the religion I profess; most firmly and entirely; and rest all my hopes upon it."

"Do you really?" said Alderstoke. "Well, I don't say that I am an unbeliever; that is, I'm not an unbeliever, upon investigation and conviction: the truth is, I never thoroughly studied the matter at all; but was contented with picking up enough information upon the subject, to be a groundwork for dispute, ridicule, and objection. Nobody shall persuade me, however, that I have not (all things considered) a good right to complain of my lot."

The remainder of this dialogue we do not choose to give in detail. Carruthers induced him to feel, though not to admit, that his life had been a continued course of injustice towards others, and misery to himself; he even worked him—now, through grief and remorse—now, through irritation, into a dreadful agony. But no feeling of contrition, nothing of the broken and humbled heart, could be produced for a moment. The miserable man, by doggedly justifying himself, was driven to accuse his Creator; pouring forth, in a torrent of passion, all the topics ordinarily suggested

by perverseness, pride, and obduracy; contending (in fact) that temptations are equivalent to compulsions, that disappointments in the most unreasonable desires, are ill usage; and that, because our consent was not obtained before our birth, we are warranted in following, to the detriment of all around us, the bent of our selfish wills; which always must become (as no atheist or scoffer whatever, has yet been found hardy enough to deny) more fanciful and intemperate upon indulgence.

To such conversation, the gaoler—astonished at the shrill, vehement tone, of Mr. Alderstoke, clearly audible all over the gallery, and in many other parts of the building—put a stop, by his appearance in the cell; and Bentley, mistaking the quiet into which the other now suddenly sunk, for something like a symptom of a relenting spirit; deceived likewise by the obscure intimation of a wish that he should repeat his visit, into hopes of being still instrumental in affording one chance to a human being in so deplorable a condition;

readily promised to come and see him again on a future day, and left the unhappy prisoner—as it turned out—for the last time.

On his return home, Major Carruthers told his lady, without entering into distressing particulars, that the conviction of Alderstoke might now be considered inevitable; and Mary, inexpressibly shocked at the idea of a public execution, and of a man well educated and honourably descended, for the murder of her own father; a man too, whose influence over her other parent, she could not but remember with a thrill of horror—found her spirits so much affected, that she retired early. Indeed, she had previously been indisposed for some time, though not in a way to grieve her friends, and, least of all, her husband. Rupert Ullesbey, therefore, who rode over to dine with them, was left tête-à-tête with Carruthers; and stayed there till a late hour of the night. Rupert heard of the full and unreserved confession made by Alderstoke to his friend, with a deep interest: the

more particularly, because it tended to explain several curious incidents that had befallen himself, during the time of his first visit to Peterstow: and before they parted, they agreed to meet at Mr. Cothelston's next morning, and proceed with him, Spelman, and such other witnesses as might be fixed upon, to examine the cottage in the wood; under the stone floor of which, the body of the unfortunate Mac-Eure was stated to have been buried. There, indeed, the skeleton was subsequently discovered; but on the following day, their intentions were frustrated by an express from the gaol to Major Carruthers, acquainting him, that the murderer had escaped the being made an ignominious example of, in this world; and announcing the event (which ought not, perhaps, to have fallen so very unexpectedly upon all parties) of that misguided desperate man's death by his own means. He was found when the turnkey first opened his cell, half-dressed, and lying upon his bed; but speechless,

and just expiring in mortal convulsions: so short, indeed, was the struggle afterwards, that it may be doubtful, whether he was not dead, before the gaoler came into the room; and near the bed, they found a paper containing a few grains of a reddish yellow powder, which, a chymist was sent for immediately to analyze.

Major Carruthers, Ullesbey, and Mr. Cothelston, soon followed by various other magistrates, repaired to the prison without delay, where a great deal of discussion took place, and many speeches were made: some blaming the gaoler for not having examined the person of his prisoner more narrowly; others, defending his conduct, in not treating any one before he was tried, with a severity which might reasonably appear unnecessary: and in these debates the day was consumed.

Disappointed in all the interesting circumstances anticipated from the trial, condemnation, and execution of Mr. Alderstoke, the rage of the Fynndal mob was,

that evening, directed against Holtofte the witness; whom they surprised, in a public-house, after the justice meeting had broken up; and used, it must be admitted, most outrageously. They smeared him with pitch, rolled him in feathers, and carried him round the town in an open cart, till it was overturned on a heap of rubbish where they were building a house: and his persecutors (most of them) being, by this time, intoxicated, their victim would, according to all probability, have been dragged or pelted to death upon the spot, had not some of the more respectable people of the place sallied forth now in good earnest, and rescued him from their hands—though not before he had sustained very grievous injury. He was conveyed from thence to the hospital, kept there a long time, and, as some say, was dismissed perfectly cured. But we know nothing of his fortunes since; except that, during the winter of eighteen hundred and thirteen, he is reported to have been seen frequently about

Glasgow streets, grown quite an old man, and apparently in the most miserable plight and poverty.

Thus ends a sort of family history, preserved principally, for the purpose of recounting the fate of David Alderstoke; which, we cannot but think, may be reflected upon with a salutary moral effect.

We repeat to the reader, that he was no monster of iniquity from his cradle; on the contrary, he showed less disposition to vice, in his earliest years, than a great many other boys about him. At that gentle age, he recommended himself to almost every body, by the civility and suavity of his manners, by a lively, playful good humour, and the symptoms he evinced—not then assumed for any delusive purposes—of a tender heart. But his passions being strong, he chose to believe, or rather to assume, that he was sent into this world, to indulge every natural inclination; and in consequence of rejecting revealed reli-

gion as a rule of conduct and foundation of hope, he had, at length, no sense at all of a divine superintendence; no feeling for any thing or any body, but himself; and no thought of human laws, but how he might defeat and escape them.

THE END.

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